三国志 ⑩

徐州の謀略戦

横山光輝

希望コミックス　43

CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI
PART 1: CHARACTERS TO KEEP IN MIND

CAO CAO MENGDE:

THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE SUPPRESSES ANOTHER REBELLION, EARNING HIM MANY TALENTED MEN AND MANY SOLDIERS. HE IS CURRENTLY THE GOVERNOR OF YANZHOU BUT IS FIGHTING LU BU WHO TRIES TO TAKE OVER HIS TERRITORY.

CONSORT HE:

HE JIN'S YOUNGER SISTER. ORIGINALLY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS WHO THEN PRESENTED HER TO EMPEROR LING. SHE BECAME EMPEROR LING'S FAVOURITE CONSORT AND GAVE BIRTH TO PRINCE LIU BIAN. SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED BY LI RU.

DIAN WEI:

CAO CAO'S FIERCE GENERAL RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS "E LAI," A MIGHTY GENERAL WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU.

DIAO CHAN:

A SLAVE GIRL BELONGING TO WANG YUN, BUT HE RAISED THE GIRL MORE OF AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. IN VOLUME 7, SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO. SHE KILLED HERSELF AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL IN VOLUME 8.

DONG CHENG:

A TRUSTED RETAINER OF EMPEROR XIAN. IN VOLUME 9, HE HELPS THE EMPEROR ESCAPE FROM LI JUE AND GUO SI.

DONG ZHUO:

GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZES CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATS HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. HE IS DEPICTED AS SADISTIC, CORRUPT, AND RUTHLESS TYRANT. HE WAS KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

GONGSUN ZAN:

GOVERNOR OF BEIPING WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. HE WAGED WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO AFTER THE LATTER TRICKED HIM AND KILLED HIS YOUNGER BROTHER BUT HAS SINCE MADE PEACE WITH YUAN SHAO.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:

SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. HE IS AS FIERCE AS GUAN YU BUT IS MORE RESTRAINED AND CALM IN HIS MANNERISMS.

HE JIN:

OLDER BROTHER OF CONSORT HE. ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER BECAME EMPEROR LING'S CONSORT. HE ATTEMPTS TO THE TEN ATTENDANTS BUT IS DISSUADED BY HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE IS LATER ASSASSINATED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.

LIU BEI XUANDE:

THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. HE IS A KIND AND VIRTUOUS MAN SAID TO BE THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. AS OF VOLUME 8, HE HAS BECOME THE GOVERNOR OF PINGYUAN.

LIU BIAO:

THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU WHO, ALONG WITH YUAN SHAO, TRIED TO KILL SUN JIAN TO RECOVER THE STOLEN IMPERIAL SEAL. HE SUCCESSFULLY THWARTED SUN JIAN'S ATTEMPTS TO TAKE JINGZHOU.

LU BU:

HE IS SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR IN THE LAND WHO RIDES ON THE FASTEST HORSE IN THE LAND, THE RED HARE. AS OF VOLUME 8, HE HAS BETRAYED HIS FORMER LORD AND FOSTER-FATHER, DONG ZHUO, BUT IS LEFT WITHOUT A TERRITORY OF HIS OWN. HE ATTEMPTS TO TAKE YANZHOU FROM CAO CAO.

SUN JIAN:

BORN IN WU COMMANDERY AND WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA. HE PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO IN VOLUME 5. WHEN HE FOUND THE IMPERIAL SEAL, HIS ALLIES YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO ATTEMPTED TO KILL HIM TO RETRIEVE THE SEAL. IN VOLUME 7, HE TRIED TO EXACT HIS REVENGE BY ATTACKING LIU BIAO BUT WAS KILLED IN BATTLE.

SUN CE:

ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN. PARTICIPATED IN HIS FATHER'S CAMPAIGN TO INVADE JINGZHOU.

SUN QUAN:

YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE.

TEN ATTENDANTS:

A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY SUCCEEDED IN ASSASSINATING GENERAL HE JIN BUT WERE LATER KILLED BY HE JIN'S ARMY LED BY YUAN SHAO.

WANG YUN:

AN OLD MAN WHO HOLDS THE POST OF MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN HAN. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL. HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY WHO INVADE CHANG'AN (UNSHOWN IN MANGA)

WEN CHOU:

HE AND YAN LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS.

YAN LIANG:

HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS.

XU CHU:

FORMERLY A PEASANT, HIS TALENTS WERE NOTICED BY CAO CAO WHO THEN TURNED HIM INTO ONE OF HIS SUBORDINATES. HE IS NOW A GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO.

YUAN SHAO:

ORIGINALLY AN ADVISOR TO HE JIN, HE LEFT THE CAPITAL AND BECAME THE GOVERNOR OF BOHAI COMMANDERY WHEN DONG ZHUO CAME TO RULE OVER LUOYANG. HE HEADED THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO AND TRIED TO KILL HIS ALLY SUN JIAN IN ORDER TO RECOVER THE STOLEN IMPERIAL SEAL.

YUAN SHU:

YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. HE ASKS SUN JIAN TO HELP HIM ATTACK LIU BIAO AND HIS OLDER BROTHER IN VOLUME 7.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:

A FIERCE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:

A FORMER RETAINER TO YUAN SHAO BUT HE IS NOW UNDER GONGSUN ZAN'S SERVICE. HE WISHES TO BE LIU BEI'S RETAINER, HOWEVER.

-MORE TO COME IN FUTURE VOLUMES-

CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI

PART 2: MINOR CHARACTERS

CAO HONG:

A GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO WHO IS ALSO HIS COUSIN. HE SAVED CAO CAO FROM CERTAIN DEATH IN VOLUME 6.

CAO SONG:

CAO CAO'S FATHER AND A FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. IN VOLUME 8, HE WAS KILLED BY ZHANG KAI, AN ESCORT SENT BY TAO QIAN, WHO WANTED TO STEAL HIS FORTUNES.

CHENG GONG:

A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH CAO CAO AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HE REGRETS HIS DECISION AFTER REALIZING CAO CAO'S CHARACTER. *IN THE ORIGINAL NOVEL, HE DEFECTS TO BECOME LU BU'S ADVISOR.

DING YUAN:

GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU AND LU BU'S FOSTER-FATHER. HE OBJECTED TO DONG ZHUO'S SCHEME TO PLACE PRINCE CHENLIU AS THE EMPEROR OF HAN. HE WAS KILLED BY LU BU.

EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG:

FORMER EMPEROR LING'S MOTHER AND EMPEROR XIAN'S GRANDMOTHER. IN VOLUME 3, CONSORT HE ORDERED FOR HER DEATH IN ORDER TO SECURE HER SON LIU BIAN'S SEAT AS THE NEXT EMPEROR OF HAN.

GUO SI:

A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED UNDER DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED. IN VOLUME 9, HE AND LI JUE FIGHT OVER THE EMPEROR BUT ENDS UP LOSING THE EMPEROR TO CAO CAO.

HUA XIONG:

ONE OF DONG ZHUO'S GENERALS. HE DEFEATED SUN JIAN'S ARMY BUT WAS LATER KILLED BY GUAN YU IN VOLUME 5.

LADY FUYOU:

FICTIONAL CHARACTER CREATED BY MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA AND LIU BEI'S FIRST LOVE. ZHANG FEI FORMERLY SERVED HER FAMILY, WHO WERE ALL KILLED BY THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS.

LI JUE:

A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED UNDER DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED. IN VOLUME 9, HE AND GUO SI FIGHT OVER THE EMPEROR BUT ENDS UP LOSING THE EMPEROR TO CAO CAO.

LIU BIAN:

THE SON OF CONSORT HE AND WAS BRIEFLY THE EMPEROR OF HAN AFTER EMPEROR LING'S DEATH. HE WAS DEPOSED BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER BY LI RU.

LIU XIE (EMPEROR XIAN OF HAN):

FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU, HE IS THE CURRENT EMPEROR OF HAN. HE BECAME THE EMPEROR WHEN DONG ZHUO FORCIBLY DETHRONED HIS HALF-BROTHER LIU BIAN.

TAO QIAN:

THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY ANGERED CAO CAO WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLED CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG.

ZHANG JIAO:

LEADER OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION. HE PASSED AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 3.

ZHANG BAO:

ZHANG JIAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE YELLOW TURBAN'S GENERAL OF THE LAND. HE WAS KILLED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 2.

SANGOKUSHI

10

THE STRATAGEM OF XUZHOU

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU

SANGOKUSHI
(ROMANCE OF THE
THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

VOLUME 10
STRATAGEM OF XUZHOU

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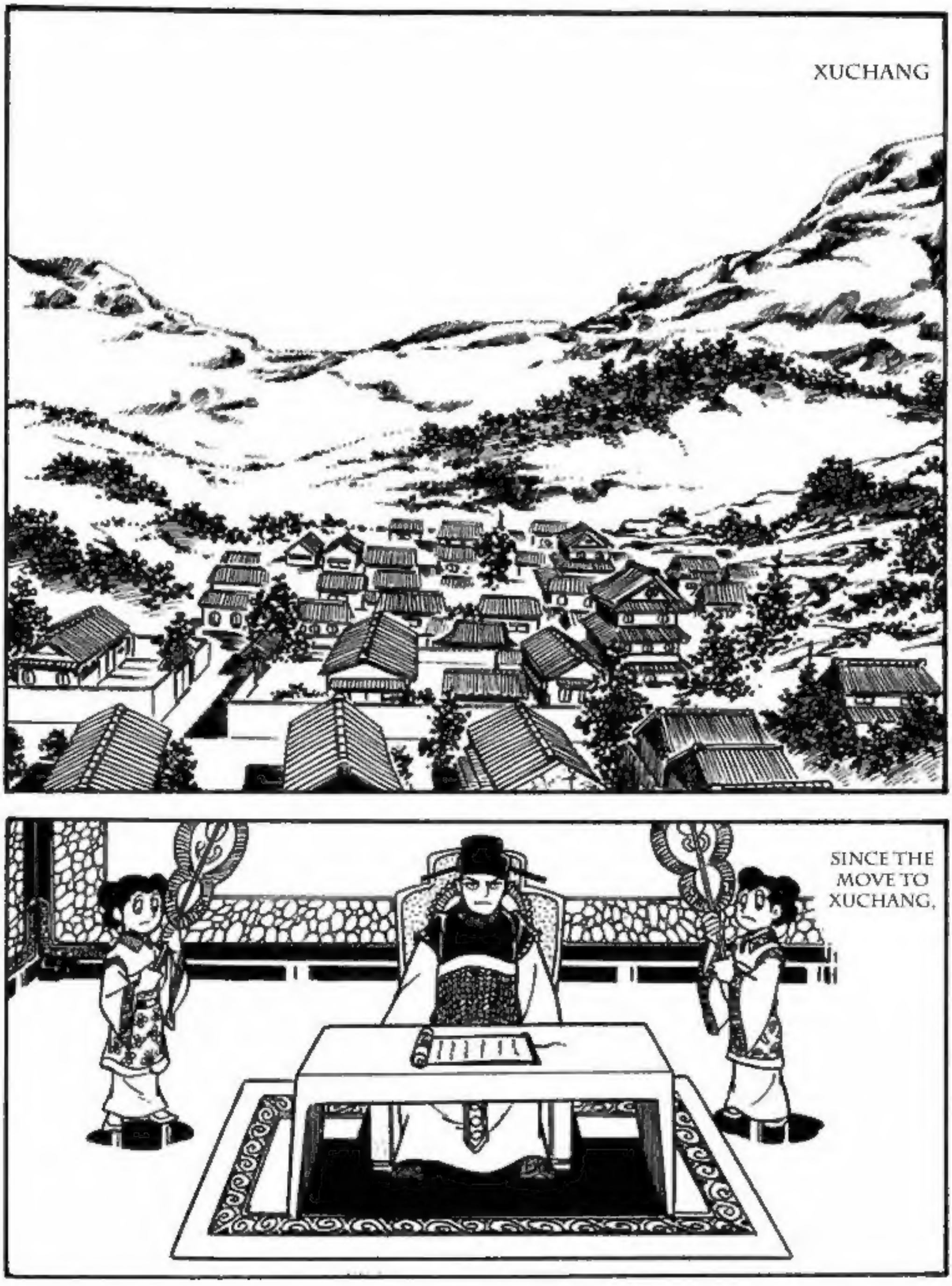
〔月刊『希望の友』掲載〕

THE TWO TIGERS AND ONE PREY



CAO CAO SEATED HIMSELF AS CHANCELLOR AND PLACED HIS SUBORDINATES TO OTHER HIGH RANKING POSTS OF THE ARMY AND THE IMPERIAL COURT.

AMONG THE ELDER STATESMEN OF THE IMPERIAL COURT, MANY LAMENTED AT THE NEW STATE OF AFFAIRS AND COULD ONLY WEAKLY SAY, "AS SOON AS ONE THING DISAPPEARS, ANOTHER REPLACES IT..."

MAY I INQUIRE WHAT MY LORD IS THINKING SO DEEPLY ABOUT?

NOW WHY WOULD MY LORD BE SO CONCERNED OVER A MAN AS UNIMPORTANT AND INSIGNIFICANT AS LIU BEI?

I WAS THINKING OF LIU BEI WHO RECENTLY BECAME GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU.

IF THOSE TWO JOIN FORCES, THEY'LL BE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH...

LIU BEI XUANDE... HE IS NO ORDINARY MAN. MOREOVER, HE HAS LU BU WITH HIM AT THE MOMENT.

HMM, IF MY LORD IS THAT CONCERNED, THEN IT WOULD BE BEST TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM BEFORE IT GROWS ANY LARGER.

JUST THINK BACK TO HOW MUCH TROUBLE LU BU ALONE GAVE TO OUR ARMY.

NO, SIR, IT WOULD BE DISADVANTAGEOUS TO FIGHT A BATTLE AFTER ALL THE MONEY SPENT FOR THE MOVE TO XUCHANG.

YOU MEAN TO WAGE WAR?

IS MY LORD AWARE OF A RUSE CALLED "TWO TIGERS AND ONE PREY"...?

IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HAVE LU BU AND XUANDE DESTROY THEMSELVES.

YES EXACTLY, MY LORD.

TWO TIGERS AND ONE PREY...?

CONSIDER THE CASE IN WHICH THERE ARE TWO STARVING TIGERS.

IF A SINGLE PREY WERE TO ENTER THE PICTURE...

THEN THE TWO STARVED TIGERS WILL FIGHT EACH OTHER OVER THE PREY.

THE LOSER WILL BE KILLED AND EVEN THE VICTOR WILL COME OUT HEAVILY WOUNDED.

HMM... SO THAT'S THE PLAN OF TWO TIGERS AND ONE PREY...?

THE WOUNDED TIGER CAN THEN BE EASILY HUNTED DOWN. THUS, THE TWO TIGERS ARE KILLED WITH LITTLE EFFORT.

XUANDE HAS BECOME THE GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU ONLY AT THE INSISTENCE OF THE FORMER GOVERNOR. HE HAS YET TO RECEIVE THE IMPERIAL COURT'S APPROVAL.

AND WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST THE PREY SHOULD BE...?

EVEN IF XUANDE WERE TO FAIL IN THE ASSASSINATION, LU BU WILL BECOME ANGERED AND THE TWO WILL FIGHT EACH OTHER TO THE DEATH.

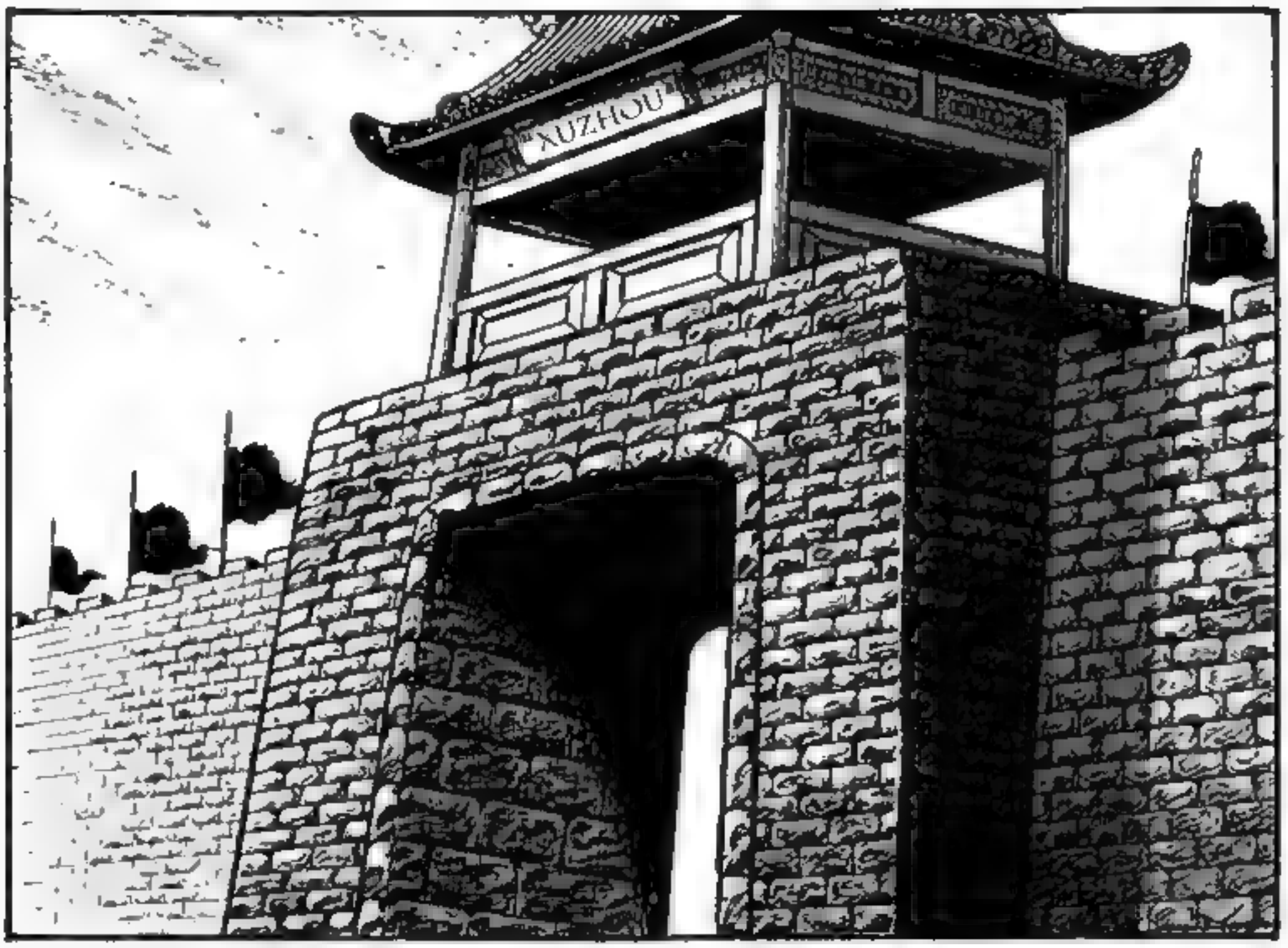
WHAT I SUGGEST IS THAT AN IMPERIAL MESSENGER SHOULD BE SENT GRANTING XUANDE'S OFFICIAL STATUS AS THE GOVERNOR AS LONG AS HE KILLS LU BU.

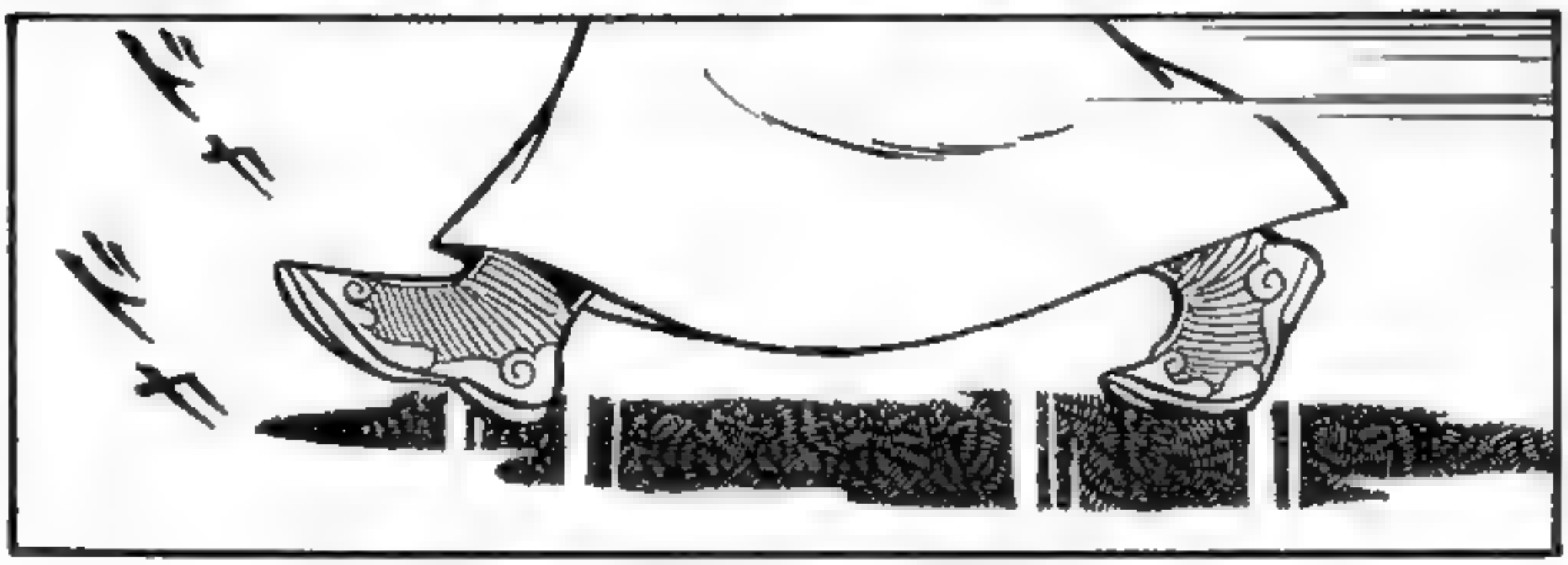
YES, MY LORD.

ALRIGHT, I SHALL LEAVE THAT TO YOU THEN.

TWO TIGERS AND ONE PREY, I SEE...

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA


XUZHOU



SSH!
SO AN IMPERIAL MESSENGER HAS COME?

I WONDER WHAT THE MESSENGER HAS COME FOR...?

BROTHER IS SPEAKING TO HIM AT THE MOMENT.

YES, OF COURSE. HIS HIGHNESS WILL EXPECT A FAVOURABLE REPLY FROM YOU HOPEFULLY SOON.

YES, THANK YOU, SIR. BUT PLEASE ALLOW ME A LITTLE TIME TO THINK IT OVER.

READ THIS.

BROTHER, WHAT DID THE IMPERIAL MESSENGER COME HERE FOR?

AHH!

WHAT!?

IT IS AN ORDER FOR ME TO KILL LU BU IF I WISH TO OFFICIALLY BECOME XUZHOU'S GOVERNOR.

WELL, ISN'T THIS GREAT NEWS!? EVEN THE EMPEROR HIMSELF ORDERED FOR LU BU TO BE KILLED!

STOP...? YOU SAY THAT LIKE I'M WRONG ABOUT THIS!

STOP IT, ZHANG FEI.

I'M BEING PERFECTLY SERIOUS HERE. IT'S FOOLISH TO CONTINUE TRUSTING THAT MAN, JUST THINK OF WHAT HE'S DONE UNTIL NOW!

LU BU CANNOT BE TRUSTED! HE MAY EVEN BETRAY US THE VERY NEXT DAY!

NOT ONLY HAS HE KILLED TWO OF HIS FOSTER FATHERS, DING YUAN AND DONG ZHUO, BUT HE ATTACKED YANZHOU THE SECOND CAO CAO HAD LEFT IT!

IF I WERE TO KILL HIM NOW, THAN HOW WOULD I BE ANY MORE MORAL OR RIGHTEOUS THAN LU BU?

ZHANG FEI, I KNOW THAT VERY WELL BUT HE HAS COME TO ME FOR PROTECTION IN HIS WEAKNESS.

THE EMPER-OR'S...

BUT BROTHER, THIS IS UNDER THE EMPEROR'S ORDER! YOU NEED NOT WORRY OF WHAT OTHERS MIGHT SAY.

?

NO. THIS IS CAO CAO'S ORDER.

I'LL HAVE TO THINK ON IT FOR THE TIME BEING.

A HOUSE IN XUZHOU

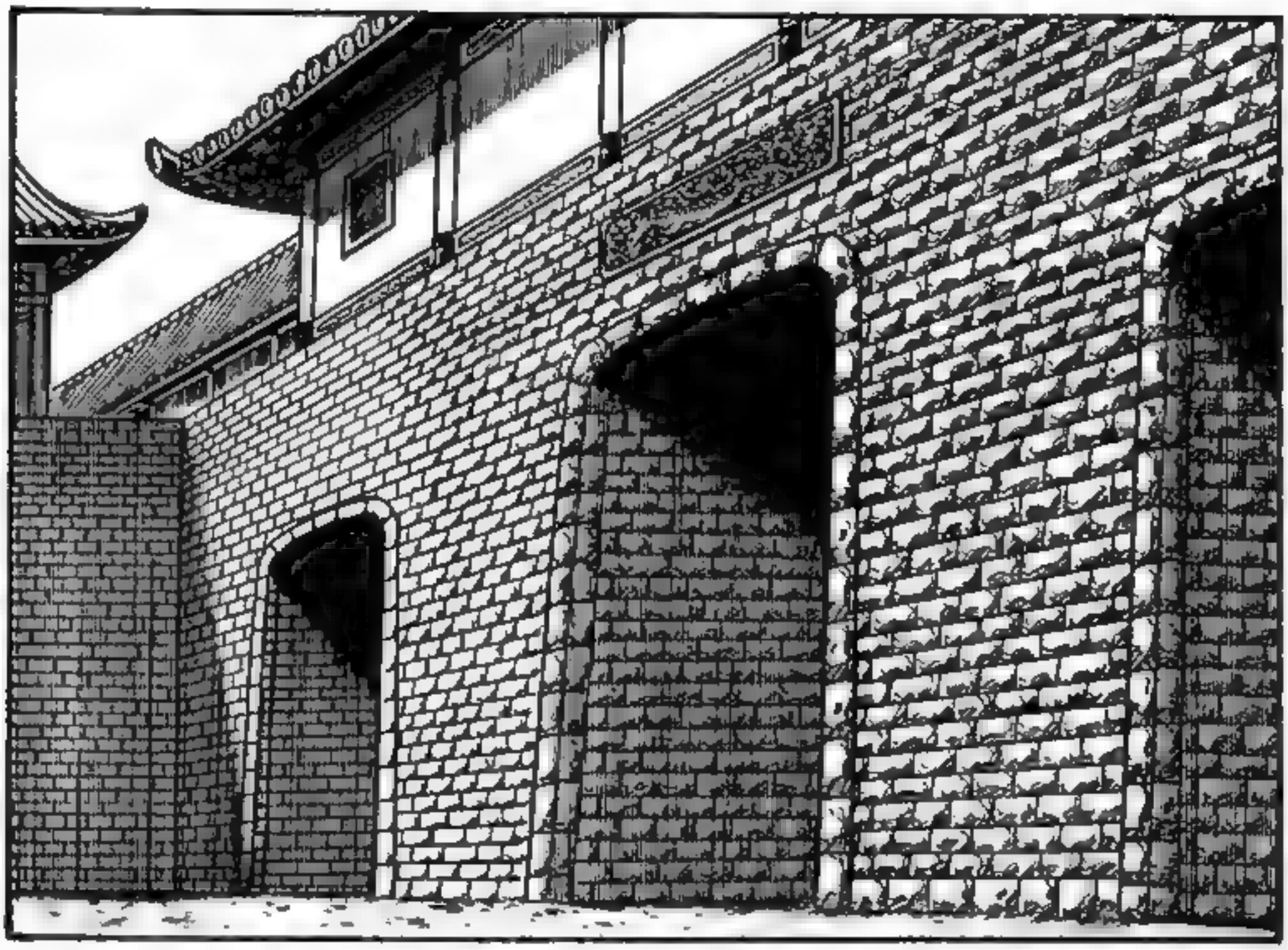
HOW WONDE-RFUL!

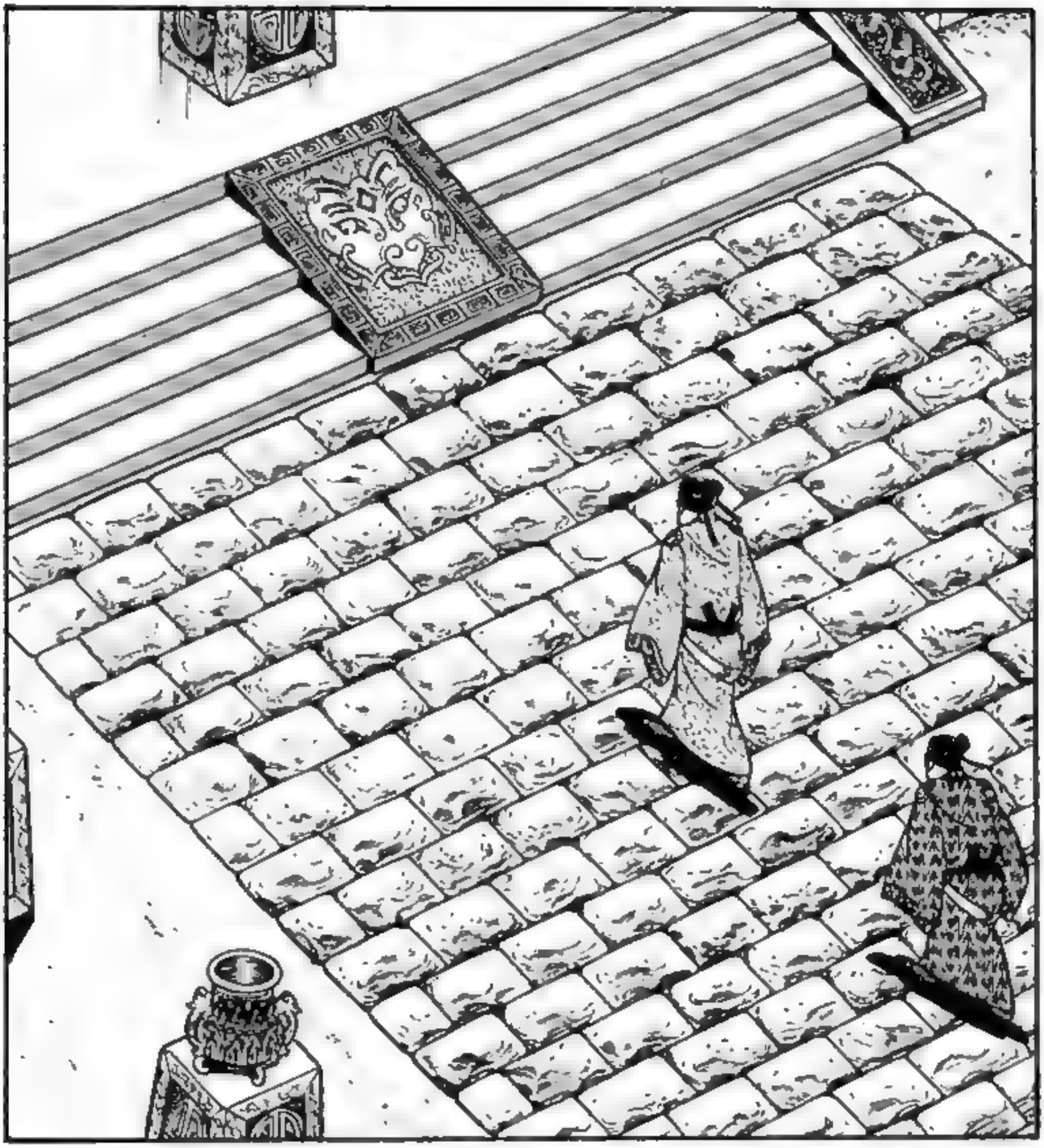
BRING MY HORSE!

YES, AN IMPERIAL MESSENGER HAS JUST COME TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE.

WHAT, LIU BEI XUANDE HAS OFFICIALLY BECOME APPOINTED AS XUZHOU'S GOVERNOR!?

I MUST GO SEE XUANDE AND CONGRATULATE HIM MYSELF.





AHH!

AH, GOOD DAY ZHANG FEI.

LU BU!

I SHALL TAKE YOUR LIFE HERE AND NOW!

W-WHAT!?

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PARASITE!?

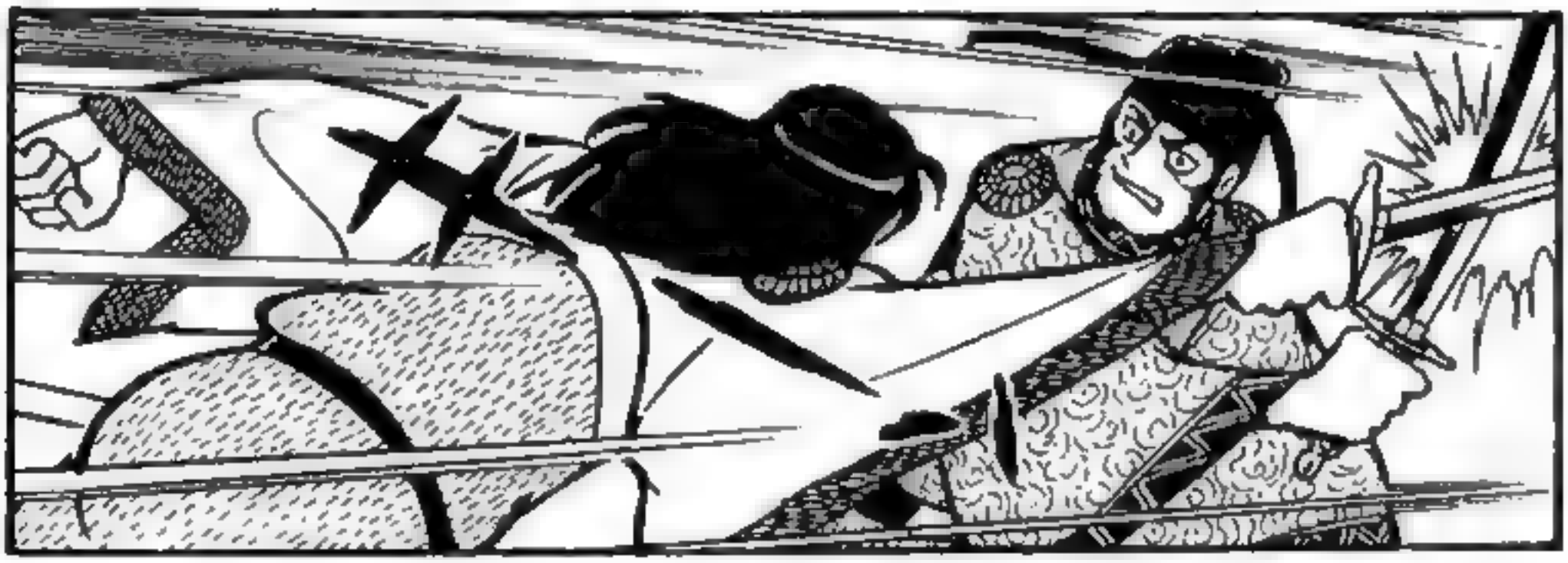
SURPRISED? I'M ONLY DOING WHAT'S RIGHT BY KILLING A PARASITE OF THIS WORLD!

WHAT!?

AN ORDER HAS COME FROM THE EMPEROR HIMSELF TO RID THE PARASITE WHO KNOWS NOT OF MORALS!

PREPARE YOUR-SELF!

AS EXPECTED OF THE INFAMOUS LU BU...



AH!

CEASE THIS AT ONCE!

B-BUT...

ZHANG FEI, I SHAN'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU DO AS YOU PLEASE.

HMPH, LUCKY BASTARD ...!

SHEATHE YOUR SWORD AND WITHDRAW!

NO, IT'S FINE...

PLEASE FORGIVE MY LITTLE BROTHER. HE CAN IMPATIENTLY ACT ON HIS RAGE LIKE A SPOILED CHILD AT TIMES.

DID MY ZHANG FEI EVEN MENTION THAT?

BUT HE TOLD ME THAT AN IMPERIAL ORDER CALLING FOR MY EXECUTION HAS BEEN SENT TO YOU. IS THIS TRUE?

I'M AFRAID IT'S TRUE.

I SEE...

BUT I ASSURE YOU THAT I HAD NO INTENTION OF CARRY-ING OUT SUCH AN ORDER AND SO I WAS FRETTING WHAT TO DO.

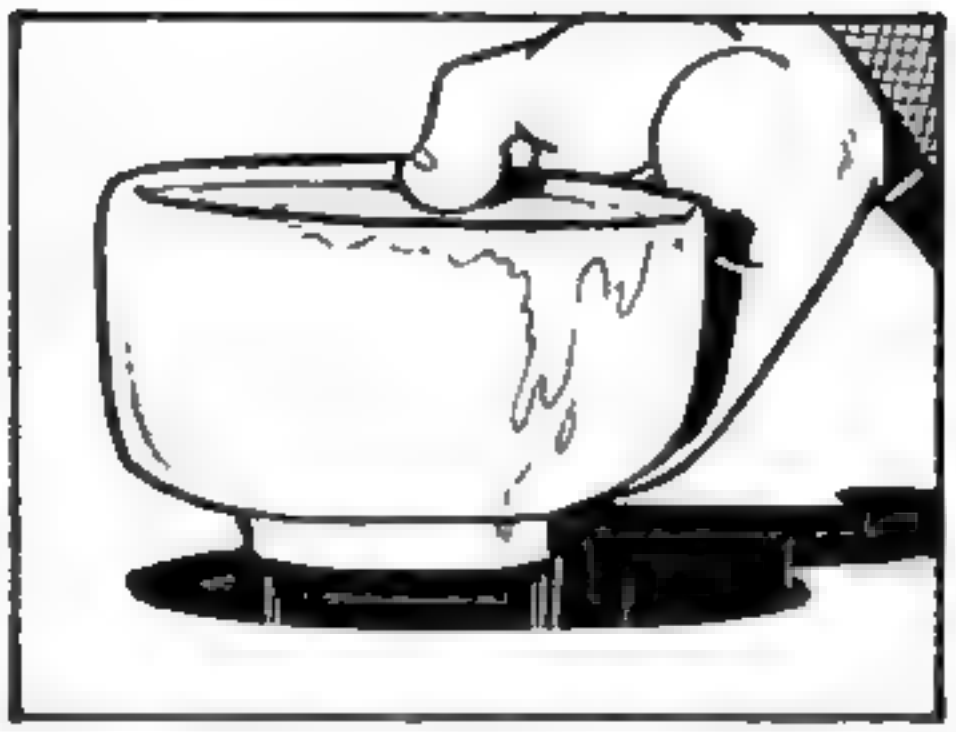
A SCHEME ...?

I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS AN UNDERHANDED SCHEME BEHIND THIS IMPERIAL ORDER.

YES, I BELIEVE SO TOO.

I SEE... IT MAY BE POSSIBLE THAT CAO CAO IS TRYING TO TURN THE TWO OF US AGAINST EACH OTHER.

WELL IN ANY CASE, I SHALL TRUST YOU MUCH AS YOU HAVE KINDLY DONE THE SAME FOR ME.



KEEPING LU BU WILL SURELY END IN HARMFUL RESULTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE...!

HMPH, JUST WHY THE HELL DOES BROTHER TRUST THAT SCUM SO MUCH!?

ALRI-GHT

I SHALL GO TALK TO BROTHER ONCE MORE ABOUT THIS ISSUE.

BROTHER!

OF COURSE. HOW COULD I *NOT* HAVE A DRINK OR TWO UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES?

ZHANG FEI, HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING AGAIN?

LET ME ASK YOU ONE THING. WHAT GOOD DO YOU THINK WILL COME OF KILLING LU BU?

IS BROTHER INDEBTED TO LU BU IN ANY WAY? JUST WHY *GO* SO FAR AS TO EVEN DISOBEY AN ORDER FROM THE EMPEROR HIMSELF!?

ZHANG FEI, YOU ARE NOT THINKING FAR AHEAD ENOUGH.

IT IS BETTER TO ELIMINATE THINGS THAT WILL ONLY CAUSE BIGGER-PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE.

AH...

NOW DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

UNDER THE GUISE OF AN IMPERIAL DECREE, CAO CAO IS ATTEMPTING TO PICK US OFF ONE BY ONE WITHOUT LIFTING HIS FINGER IF POSSIBLE.

CAO CAO WISHES FOR ME TO FIGHT A BLOODY BATTLE TO THE DEATH AGAINST LU BU. HAVE YOU NOT HEARD OF THE SAYING THAT TWO HEROES CANNOT COEXIST?

YES, I BELIEVE SO TOO.

I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO MAKE AN APPROPRIATE EXCUSE TO THE IMPERIAL MESSEN-GER AND SEND HIM BACK.

TIGER AGAINST WOLF

I REGRETFULLY MUST INFORM THE HIGHNESS THAT THE MATTER OF LU BU CANNOT BE DEALT IMMEDIATELY AS OF THE MOMENT. I ONLY BEG FOR JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME UNTIL A MORE OPPORTUNE CHANCE ARRIVES...
AS EXPECTED OF MY ADVERSARY... YOU'VE SKILLFULLY SEEN THROUGH MY PLAN.
THEN I HAVE ANOTHER PLAN TO SUGGEST, MY LORD...
IT SEEMS THAT XUANDE WILL NOT FALL FOR YOUR TWO TIGERS AND ONE PREY PLAN.

XUANDE'S AMBITIONS GROWS WITH EACH DAY. HE HAS EVEN ASKED FOR AN IMPERIAL AUTHORIZATION TO TAKE OVER THE REGIONS IN NANYANG.

FIRST, A MESSENGER IS SENT OUT IN SECRET TO YUAN SHU OF NANYANG TELLING HIM THIS:

IT IS CALLED *TIGER AGAINST WOLF*, SIR.

THE NEXT PLAN?

AND AT THE SAME TIME, AN IMPERIAL MESSENGER IS SENT TO XUANDE TO TELL HIM THIS:

YUAN SHU'S UNRULY BEHAVIOUR CAN NO LONGER GO UNPUNISHED. YOU ARE TO LEAD AN ARMY TO SUBDUE YUAN SHU AND TAKE OVER NANYANG FROM HIM.

AND...?

THE VIRTUOUS XUANDE WOULD NOT DARE DISOBEY AN IMPERIAL DECREE, ESPECIALLY IF IT'S TO PUNISH AN IMMORAL MAN SUCH AS YUAN SHU. HE WILL *MOST* DEFINITELY LEAD AN ARMY TO NANYANG.

THE WOLF...? YOU MEAN LU BU?

WHEN THE TIGER LEAVES HIS DEN TO HUNT THE LEOPARD, THE WOLF WILL COME OUT TO PLAT.

HMM, LU BU WOULD CERTAINLY MAKE A MOVE IF THAT WERE TO HAPPEN.

EXACTLY, MY LORD. THIS IS THE PLAN CALLED *TIGER AGAINST WOLF.*

WITHOUT A DOUBT, SIR. XUANDE WILL MOST CERTAINLY ATTACK NANYANG BECAUSE THIS PLAN EXPLOITS HIS VERY WEAKNESS.

BUT WILL XUANDE REALLY MOVE AS YOU PREDICT?

YES, MY LORD.

ALRIGHT, SEND THE TWO IMPERIAL MESSENGERS AT ONCE!

YOU DO BRING UP A GOOD POINT. XUANDE WOULD NEVER DARE TO REFUSE SUCH AN ORDER FROM HIS HIGHNESS HIMSELF...

YES, THIS IS NOT A SECRET ORDER, UNLIKE LAST TIME.

I MUST SUBDUE YUAN SHU OF NANYANG!?

UNDER-
STOOD,
SIR.

IT IS AN
OFFICIAL
IMPERIAL
DECREE.

YES, I BELIEVE
THE SAME, MY
LORD. WE MUST
NOT CARELESSLY
FOLLOW THE
ORDER.
BROTHER, THIS
MUST BE
ANOTHER OF
CAO CAO'S
PLOYS.

BUT IT IS AN IMPERIAL DECREE THIS TIME. IT CANNOT BE DISOBEYED.

YES, I AM WELL AWARE OF THAT TOO.

YES, EXACTLY.

IF MY LORD IS DETERMINED TO LEAD AN ARMY TO NANYANG, THEN WE MUST DECIDE WHO WILL REMAIN BEHIND TO PROTECT XUZHOU IN THE MEANWHILE.

NO, I'M AFRAID I WILL NEED YOU OUT ON THE BATTLE-FIELD TO CONSULT STRATEGIES WITH.

ALLOW ME TO HANDLE THAT RESPONSI-BILITY, BROTHER.

THEN JUST LEAVE IT TO ME!

WHAT DOES BROTHER MEAN BY THAT?

NO, I'M AFRAID YOU WON'T DO EITHER.

YOU ARE A NATURALLY AGGRE-SSIVE MAN.

YOU CAN BECOME VERY RECKLESS WHEN YOU DRINK. I AM MOST CONCERNED ABOUT THAT.

MOREOVER, YOU HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM.

I DON'T DOUBT YOUR OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES, BUT YOUR DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES ARE ANOTHER MATTER.

I FEAR THE MOUTH DOES NOT CORRESPOND TO THE HEART.

WELL EASY THEN! THEN I'LL JUST QUIT DRINKING.

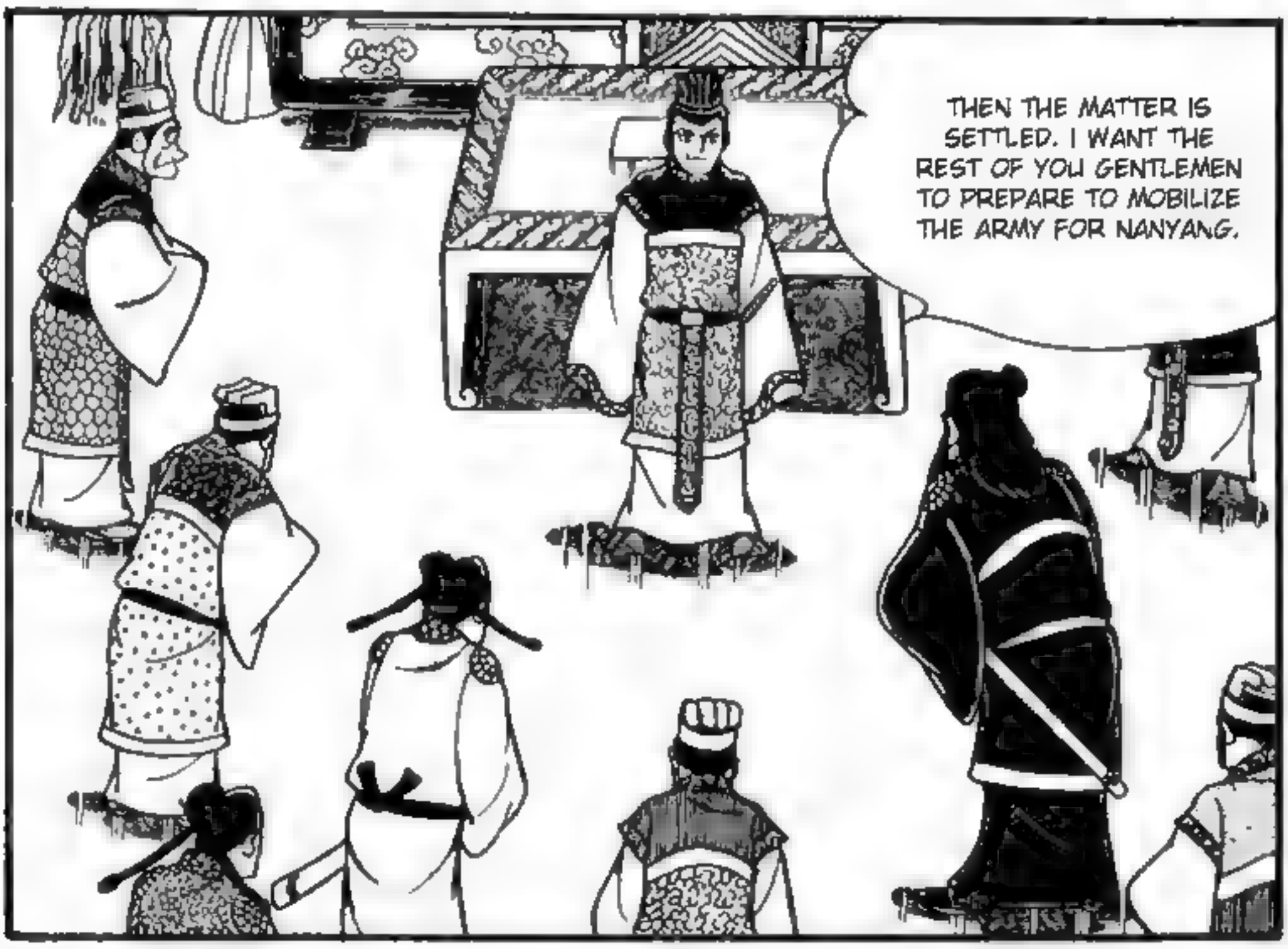
N-NO, I...

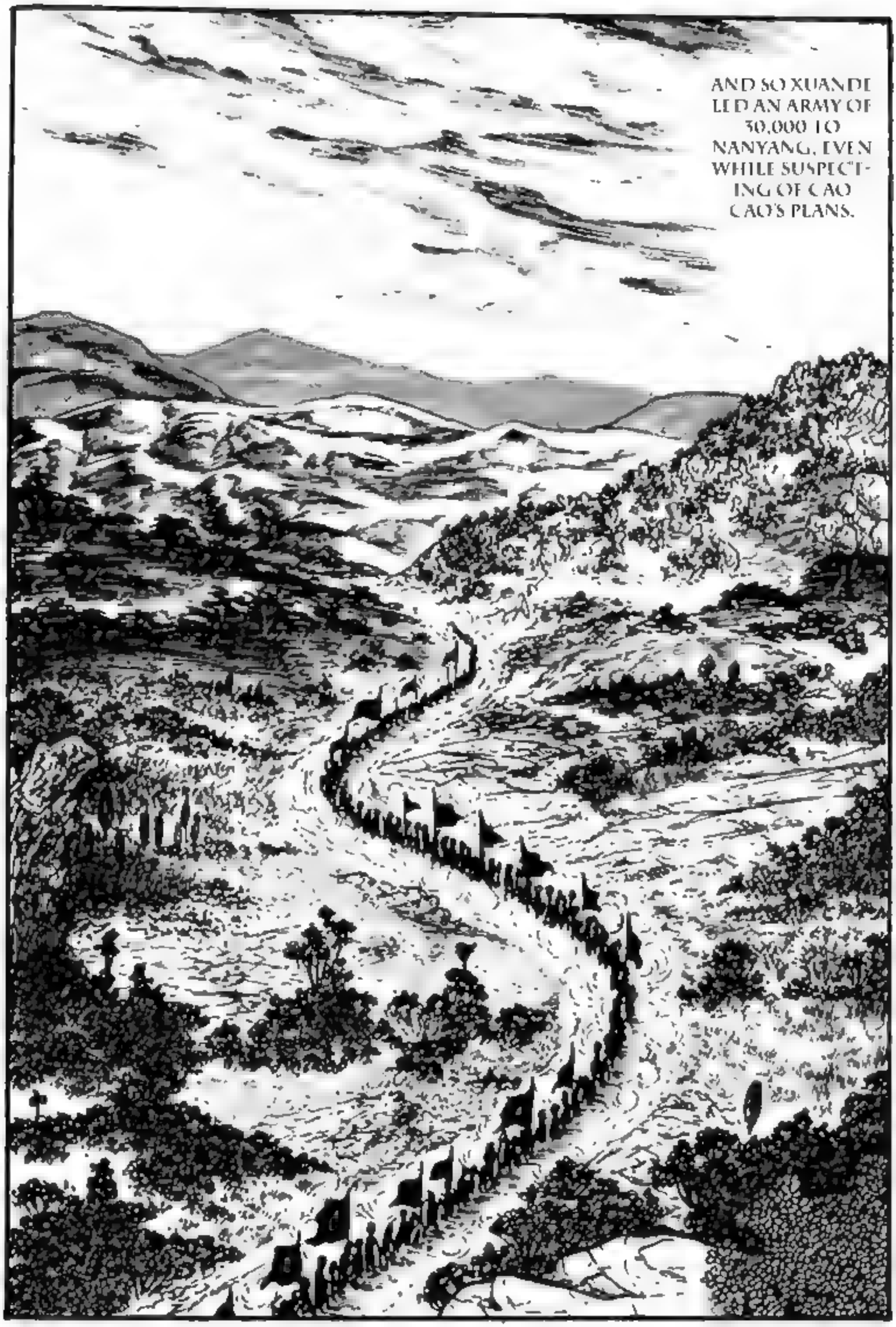
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY!? HAVE I EVER BROKEN A PROMISE MADE TO MY BROTHER!?

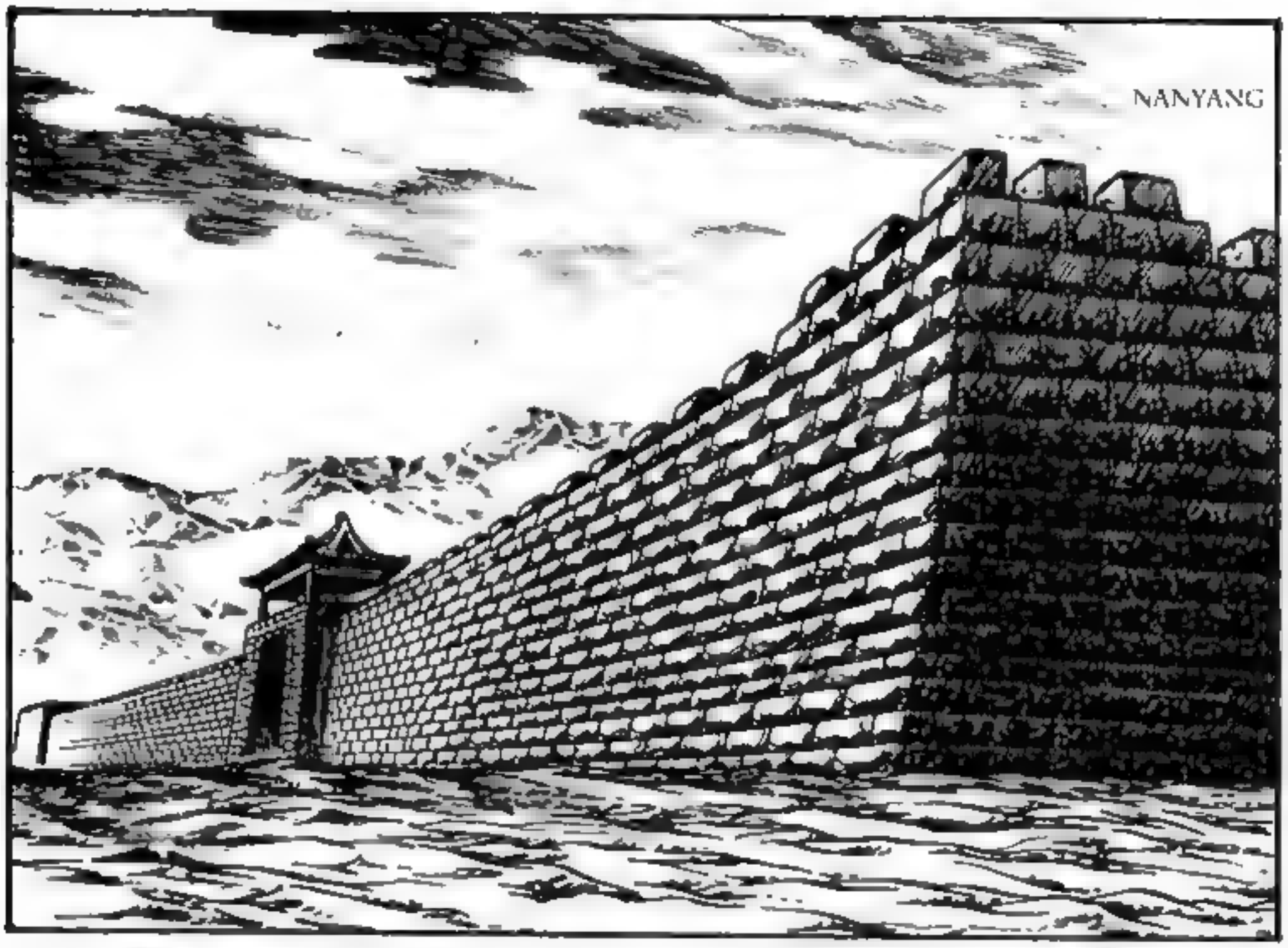
WHY THANK YOU, BROTHER.

FINE, FINE. I SHALL BELIEVE YOUR WORDS, ZHANG FEI. YOU MAY STAY BEHIND TO GUARD XUZHOU.

YES, I KNOW, BROTHER.
BUT BE SURE TO TREAT YOUR SUBORDINATES WELL AND LISTEN TO THE ADVISORS. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, STAY AWAY FROM ALCOHOL AND REFRAIN FROM VIOLENT ACTS.


THEN THE MATTER IS SETTLED. I WANT THE REST OF YOU GENTLEMEN TO PREPARE TO MOBILIZE THE ARMY FOR NANYANG.


AND SO XUANDE LED AN ARMY OF 30,000 TO NANYANG, EVEN WHILE SUSPECTING OF CAO CAO'S PLANS.


NANYANG

YUAN SHU, THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG READERS MAY REMEMBER HOW HE PLOTTED WITH SUN JIAN TO ATTACK LIU BIAO AND HIS OLDER BROTHER YUAN SHAO

I HAVE COME TO DELIVER THIS SECRET MESSAGE TO SIR.

YES, SIR.

SO YOU'RE THE MESSENGER SENT BY CAO CAO?

AH!!!

THANK YOU, SIR.

I THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING ME THIS.

YES, MY LORD

ASSEMBLE ALL THE MEN RIGHT AWAY.

I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A LETTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FROM CAO CAO.

I THANK YOU GENTLEMEN FOR COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.

XUANDE'S AMBITIONS GROWS WITH EACH DAY HE HAS EVEN ASKED FOR AN IMPERIAL AUTHORIZATION TO TAKE OVER THE REGIONS IN NANYANG.

YES, SIR.

READ IT OUT.

BECAUSE YOU AND I HAVE BEEN CLOSE FRIENDS SINCE LONG AGO, I COULD NOT KEEP QUIET ABOUT THIS. I FELT IT WAS ONLY MY DUTY AS A FRIEND TO WARN YOU OF THIS THREAT.

THAT STRAW WEAVER DARES TO STEAL MY LANDS!?

DID YOU HEAR THAT MEN!?

HE HAS GOTTEN MUCH TOO FULL OF HIMSELF! THE NERVE...!

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THAT LOWLY PEASANT EVER BECAME THE GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU, BUT...

YES, SIR!
HEAR, HEAR!
UNFORGIVABLE, I SAY! WE SHALL LEAD AN ARMY TO XUZHOU AT ONCE TO SHOW HIM HIS PLACE!

HE NEEDS TO BE SENT OUT BACK TO THE FIELDS WHERE HE BELONGS!
HMPH, THAT ARROGANT PEASANT...!

AND SO YUAN SHU, TOO, LED AN ARMY OF 100,000 TO ATTACK XUZHOU, JUST AS CAO CAO HAD WANTED.

BETRAYAL

YES, SIR!

CONTINUE WORKING HARD, MEN.

GOOD, GOOD.

MY BROTHERS ARE RISKING THEIR LIVES OUT ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF NANYANG SO I HAVE TO GIVE MY ALL HERE AS WELL...

IT'S BEST TO UNDO THE BOWSTRING TO RELIEVE THE STRESS EVERY NOW AND THEN.

AS THEY SAY, EVEN A BOW LEFT ALONE WILL LOSE ITS STRENGTH.

BUT KIND WORD ALONE ISN'T THE BEST WAY TO COMMAND YOUR SOLDIERS.

YOU CALLED, GENERAL?

ANYBODY THERE!?

YES, SIR.

BRING OUT THE WINE FROM THE STORAGE ROOM AND SHARE THEM WITH THE REST OF THE MEN. A LITTLE STRESS RELIEF EVERY NOW AND THEN IS NEEDED TO KEEP THE MEN SHARP. BEING ON EDGE ALL THE TIME IS ONLY HARMFUL.

YOU SAID IT!

GENERAL ZHANG FEI SURE IS AN UNDERSTANDING GUY!

HEY, WE GOT DRINKS TO PASS AROUND UNDER THE GENERAL'S ORDERS!

LINE UP, LINE UP!

WARMS YOUR BODY RIGHT UP!

HAHA, NOW THIS HITS THE SPOT!

NO, NO. I MADE A PROMISE WITH MY BROTHER TO ABSTAIN.

WON'T YOU BE HAVING A DRINK TOO, GENERAL?

GULP!

WELL, THEN EXCUSE US SIR.

THIS WAS ZHANG FEI'S GREAT MISTAKE.

MAN, OUR GENERAL SURE IS GREAT!

YEAH, A LITTLE BOOZE IS THE PERFECT THING TO LOOSEN YOU UP AFTER BEING ON EDGE FOR SEVERAL NIGHTS!

It

It

It

It

It

It

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE A DRINK WITH US, GENERAL?

BUT IT'S JUST A SINGLE GLASS .. I'M SURE THIS MUCH IS PRACTICALLY NOTHING FOR THE GENERAL!

I'D LIKE TO BUT I MADE A PROMISE TO MY BROTHER TO NOT DRINK WHILE HE'S GONE.

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT... ONLY A WHIFF...

FOR SIR, DRINKING THIS MUCH WOULD BE THE SAME AS TAKING A WHIFF OF ALCOHOL FOR NORMAL PEOPLE.

HAHA. WELL, THAT IS TRUE...

SO WILL THAT BE A YES?

SURE, JUST A LITTLE WON'T HURT.

AHHH!!!

THEN HOW ABOUT ANOTHER?

THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' THAT TASTES BETTER THAN FINE WINE!

THEN I SHALL SAY NO MORE.

OH RIGHT, RIGHT.

BUT I DID MAKE THAT PROMISE...

W-WAIT, WAIT!

IWAN!

IT'S LIKE WATER FOR ME!

AHH!

YOU EVEN SAID IT YOURSELF, RIGHT!?

THIS MUCH ISN'T ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT FOR ME...!

THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S JUST LIKE WATER!

HA HA HA HA

WHERE'S ALL THIS RUCKUS COMING FROM...?

?

HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA HA

GAHAHAHA!

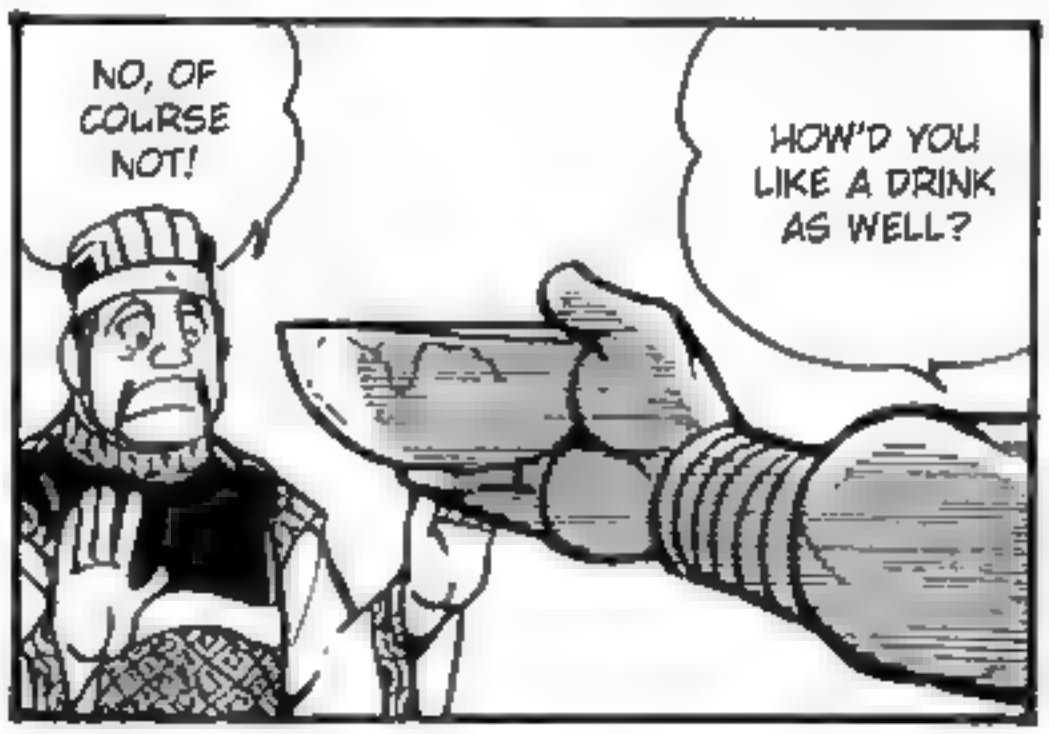
HA HA HA HA HA

HMM?

AGHH!

DRINK!
DRINK!
HA HA

G-GENERAL WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?


NO, OF COURSE NOT!
HOW'D YOU LIKE A DRINK AS WELL?

AH, IT'S YOU, CAO BAO.

I'M LETTING THE SOLDIERS RELIEVE THEIR STRESS WITH A LITTLE DRINK AFTER BEING ON CONSTANT GUARD FOR SEVERAL NIGHTS.

YES, YES, I REMEMBER. BUT THIS MUCH IS HARDLY ANYTHING FOR ME!

BUT WHAT OF THE PROMISE MADE TO THE LORD?

WHAT!?

BUT A PROMISE IS A PROMISE! MOREOVER, YOU HAVE QUITE THE REPUTATION FOR BEING A VIOLENT DRUNK...!

W-WELL... THAT'S WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY...

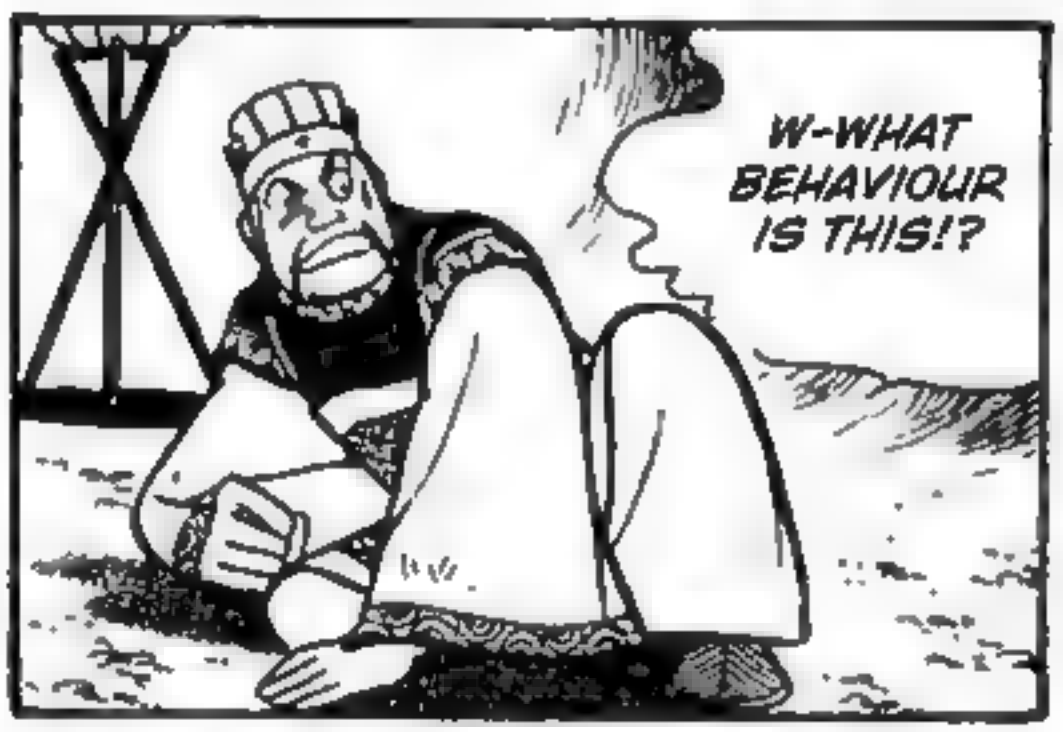
JUST WHO'S GOING AROUND SAYING THOSE THINGS BEHIND MY BACK...!?

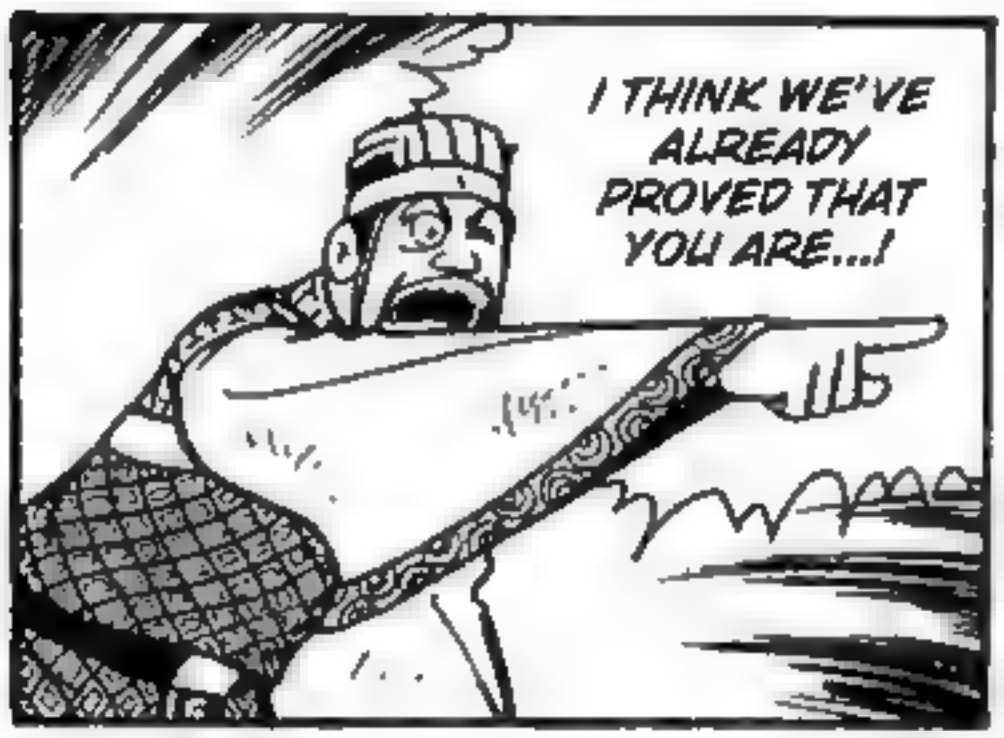
BRING MORE BOOZE!

WELL THEN, SHALL WE PUT IT TO THE TEST TO SEE IF I REALLY DO GET VIOLENT WHEN I'M DRUNK...?

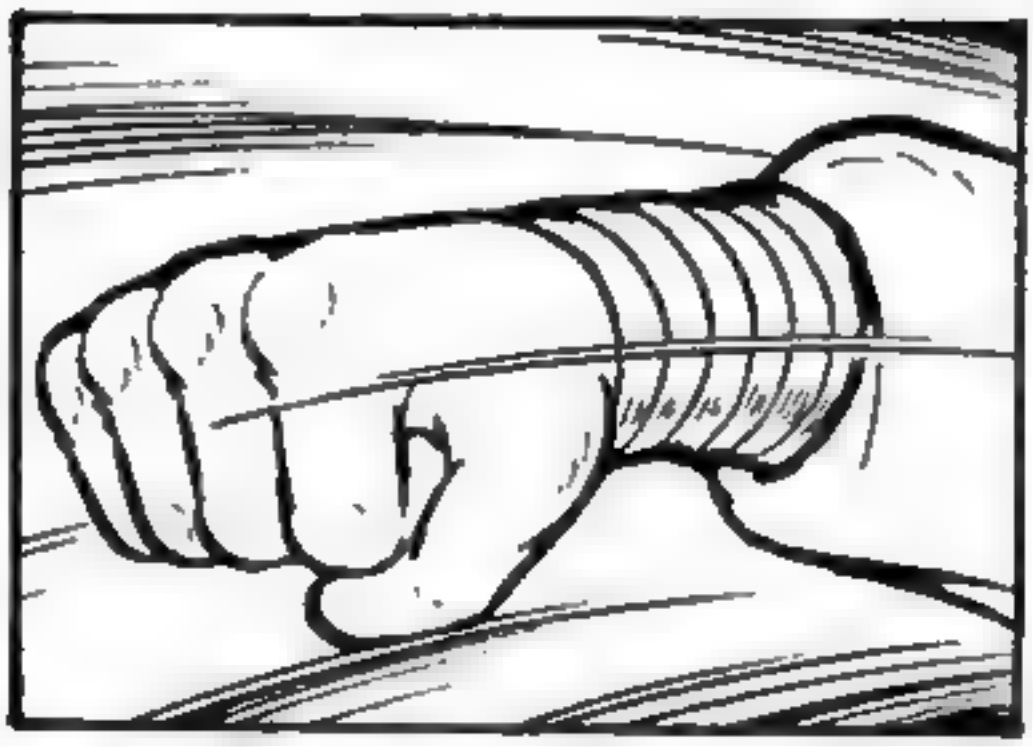
SHUT UP!

PLEASE STOP, GENERAL! I'M DOING THIS FOR SIR'S SAKE!

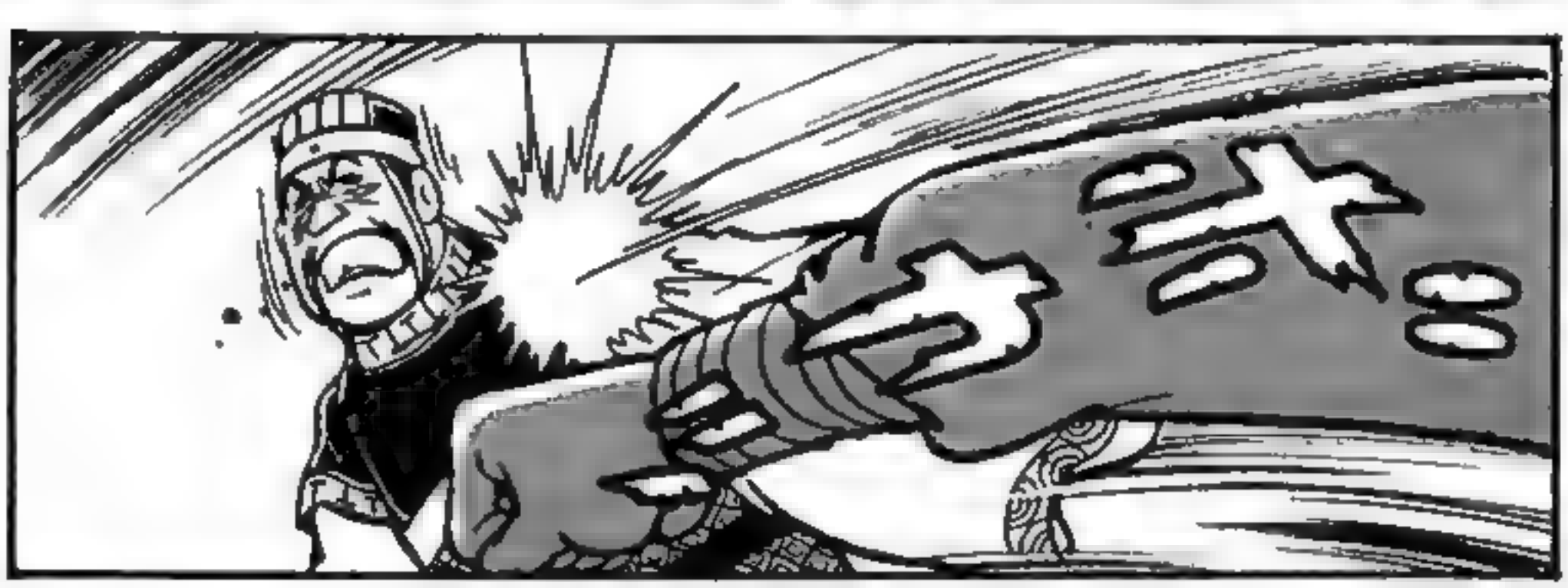

W-WHAT BEHAVIOUR IS THIS!?


I THINK WE'VE ALREADY PROVED THAT YOU ARE...!

WHAT D'YOU MEAN WHAT? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID I'M A VIOLENT DRUNK! I'M JUST GONNA SEE IF THAT'S REALLY TRUE...!



W-WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY!?


DOOO

PLEASE STOP, SIR!

I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU, YOU LITTLE...!

SIR!

SIR...!

PLEASE CALM DOWN SIR!

PISS OFF!

HMPH! WHERE'D THAT LITTLE SHITHEAD GO...!?

PATHETIC!

MUST'VE RAN AWAY!

AHHH....

WINE! BRIN ME MORE WINE!

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SAY THAT I SHOULD STOP DRINKING NOW, ARE YOU...?

YOU FELLAS SHOULD DRINK SOME MORE AS WELL...!

N-NO SIR...

NO...

UGHH...

A MERE CIVIL OFFICIAL DARES TELL ME, THE ONE PROTECTING THIS ENTIRE CASTLE, WHAT TO DO...!?

AH, I FEEL GREAT...

YAWN... GETTIN' A LITTLE BIT SLEEPY...

ZZZZ!!!

THAT BASTARD ...!

NOT ONLY DID HE STOMP ON ME BUT HE EVEN LEFT A WOUND ON MY FACE...!!!

I HAVE MY PRIDE AS A MAN...!

BUT I WON'T JUST GO TO BED LICKING MY WOUNDS LIKE THIS...!

BUT BEING A CIVIL OFFICIAL, I WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE...

IF I WERE A WARRIOR, I'D CHALLENGE HIM TO A FIGHT...

THAT'S IT...!

XIAOPEI LU BU'S RESIDENCE

I'VE JUST RECEIVED A SECRET MESSAGE FROM CAO BAO, AN OFFICIAL OF XUZHOU.

WHAT IS IT AT THIS LATE IN THE NIGHT?

IT SAYS THAT ZHANG FEI AND THE OTHER GUARDS ARE ALL FAST ASLEEP AFTER A NIGHT OF DRINKING.

JUST WHY DID CAO BAO LET ME KNOW OF SUCH A THING?

BUT... I CANNOT DO THAT...

SIR, NOW WOULD BE THE BEST TIME TO TAKE OVER XUZHOU.

AND WHY IS THAT, SIR?

HE IS A VIRUTOUS MAN WHO EVEN REFUSED CAO CAO'S ORDER TO KILL ME.

I AM AWARE OF THAT AS WELL, SIR.

XUANDE HAS TREATED ME KINDLY WITH RESPECT.

IF YOU KNOW THAT ALREADY, THEN WHY ARE YOU STILL ASKING ME TO BETRAY HIS KINDNESS AND STEAL XUZHOU?

YES, I REALIZE THAT TOO, MY LORD.

HAS MY LORD ABANDONED ALL HIS AMBITIONS...?

THEN LET ME ASK SIR JUST ONE THING. DOES MY LORD WISH TO LIVE OUT THE REMAINDER OF HIS DAYS AS A MERE GUEST IN XUZHOU?

BY TAKING OVER XUZHOU ALONE, AN ARMY OF 100 OR 200 THOUSAND CAN BE EASILY RAISED WITHIN DUE TIME.

IF MY LORD WISHES TO CONQUER THIS NATION, THEN SIR MUST FIRST OBTAIN SOME TERRITORY AND RAISE AN ARMY.

IT IS NATURAL FOR THE STRONG TO PREY ON THE WEAK! PLEASE THINK NO MORE OF SOFT-HEARTED THOUGHTS AND MAKE A DECISION, MY LORD!

FIRST WILL COME XUZHOU, THEN AN ARMY, AND THEN THE ENTIRE NATION!

FINE. WAKE UP THE MEN.

YOUR DECISION, MY LORD!

A MOST WISE DECISION, MY LORD. I AM SURE SIR'S DAY WILL COME SOON ENOUGH.

CLANG! CLANG!

HMM?

HAHHH!

AGHHHH!

ZZZZZ!!!

WHAT'S GOING ON...!?

WHAT!?

WE'RE BEING ATTACKED BY LU BU'S ARMY!

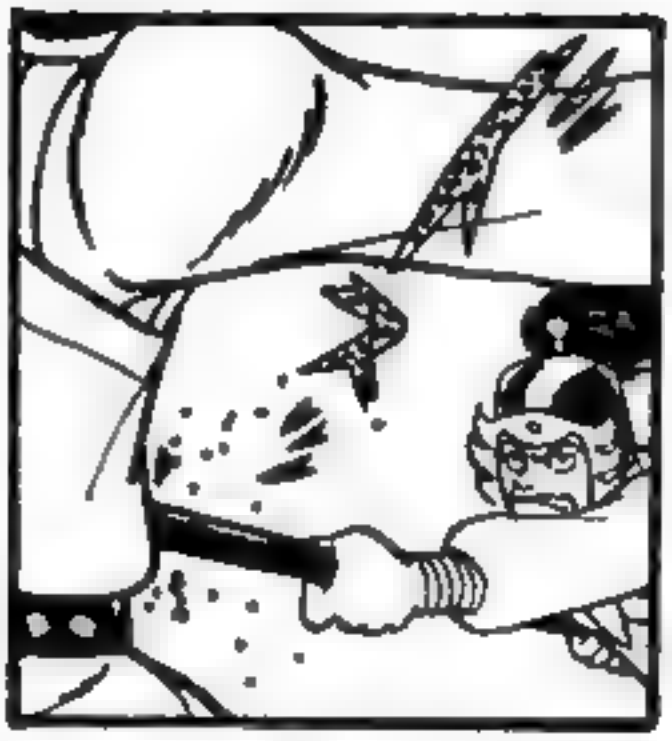
WHA!?

GENERAL!
WHAT'S GOING ON!?

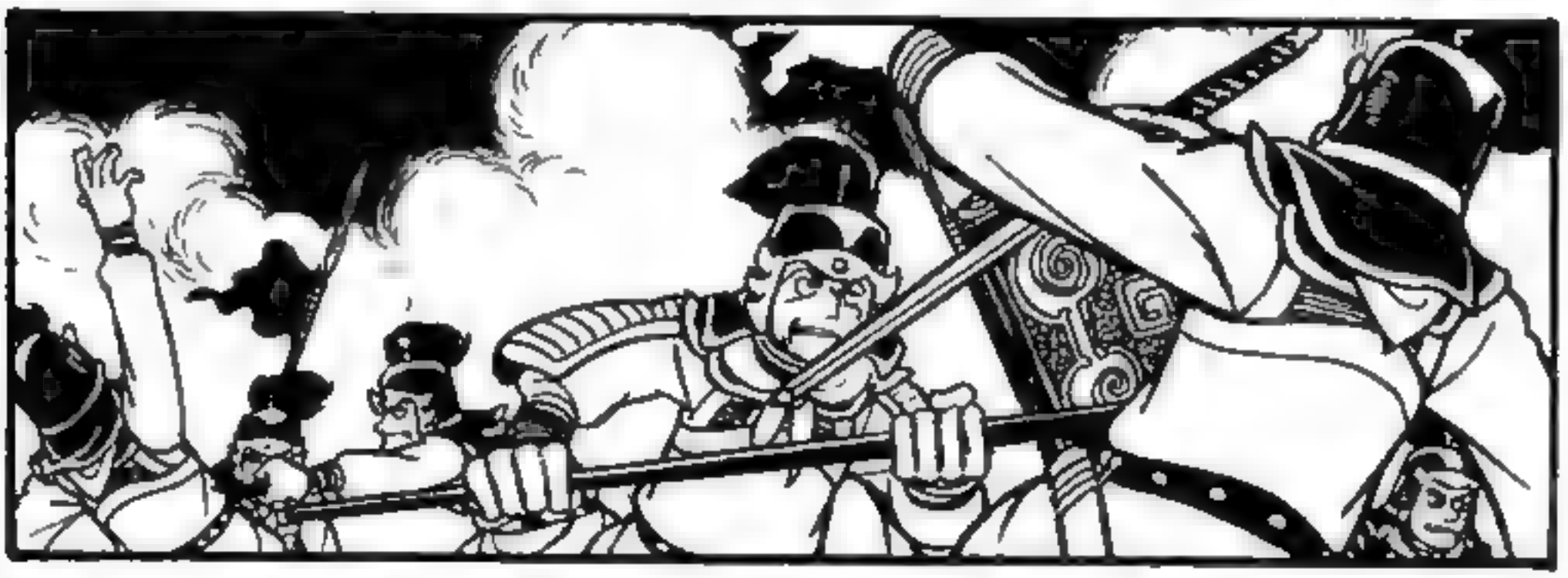
THIS IS HOW THAT BASTARD REPAYS MY BROTHER'S KINDNESS...!?

NO!

I SWEAR I'LL KILL HIM...!



UGHH...! MY HEAD IS SPINNING...



SHIT!

SO THIS IS WHERE YOU WERE SIR!

GENERAL, I SUGGEST WE FLEE FOR THE TIME BEING. MOST OF OUR MEN HAVE ALREADY BEEN KILLED OR SURRENDERED.

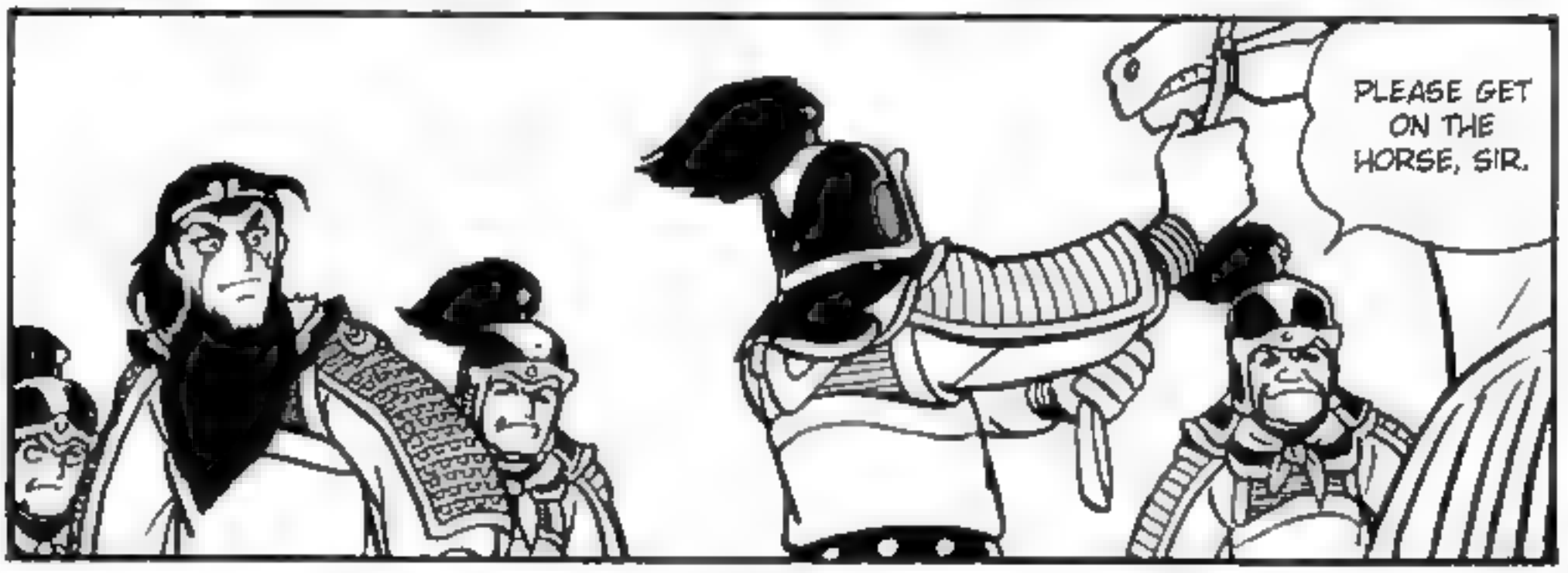
PLEASE STOP, GENERAL!

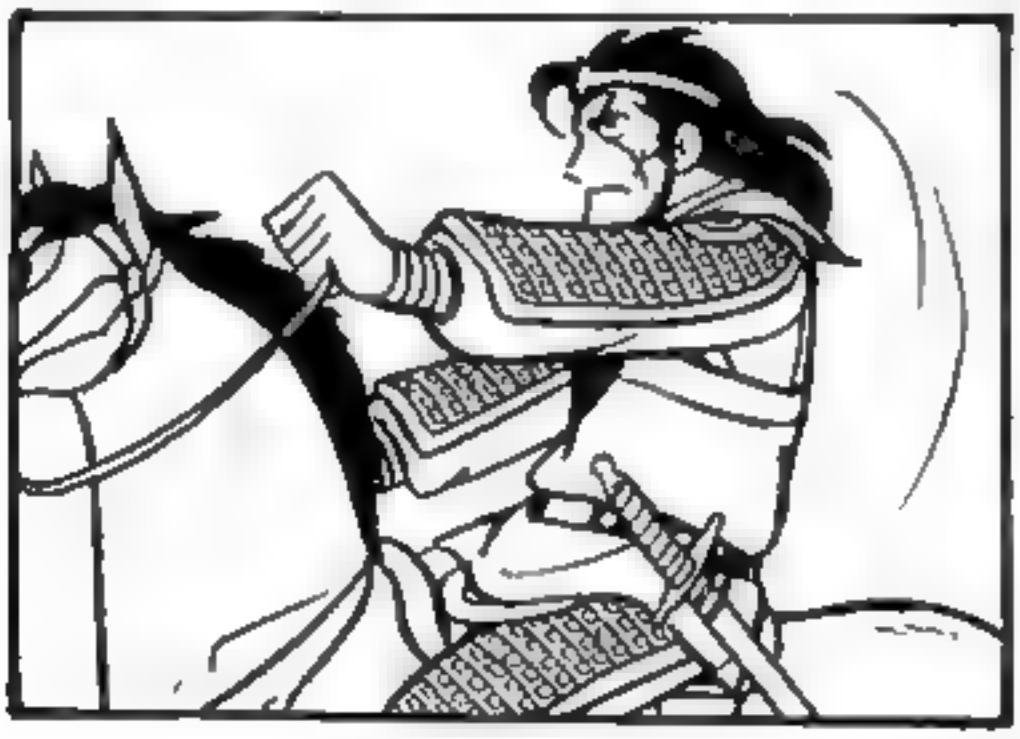
HEARING THAT MAKES IT HARDER TO RETREAT... I HAVE TO TAKE LU BU'S HEAD NO MATTER WHAT NOW!

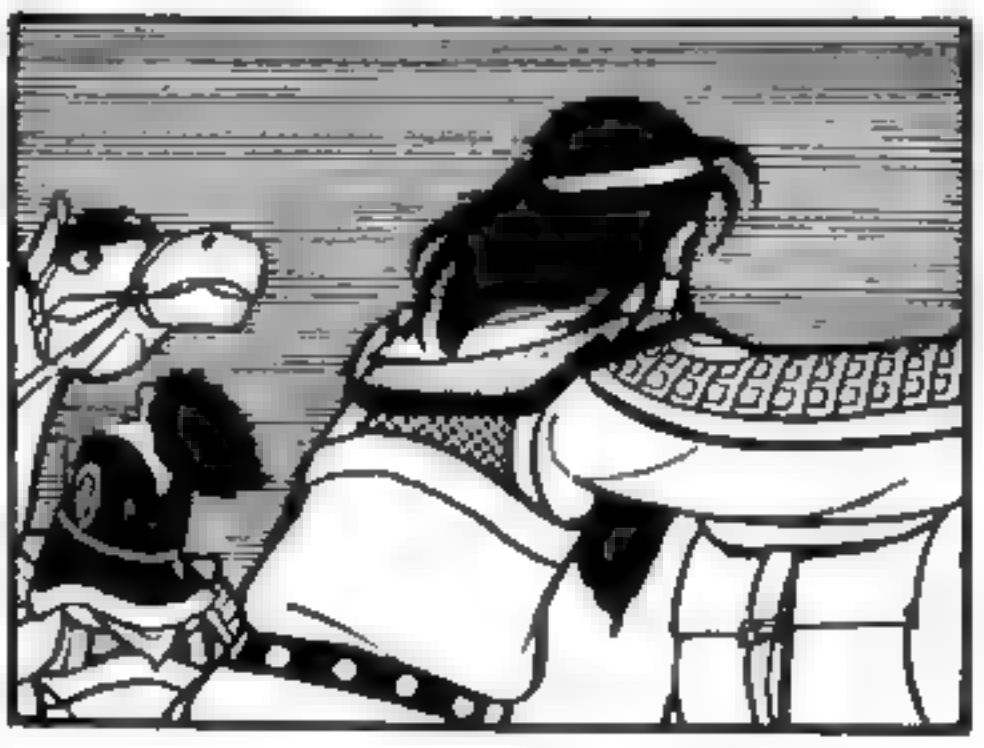
SHIT!

IF I HAD JUST KEPT THAT PROMISE, THIS WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED...

SIR CAN HAVE REVENGE AT A LATER DAY...!
SIR HAS STILL YET TO SOBER UP. I'M AFRAID THAT KILLING LU BU WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE AS YOU ARE, SIR!


PLEASE GET ON THE HORSE, SIR.

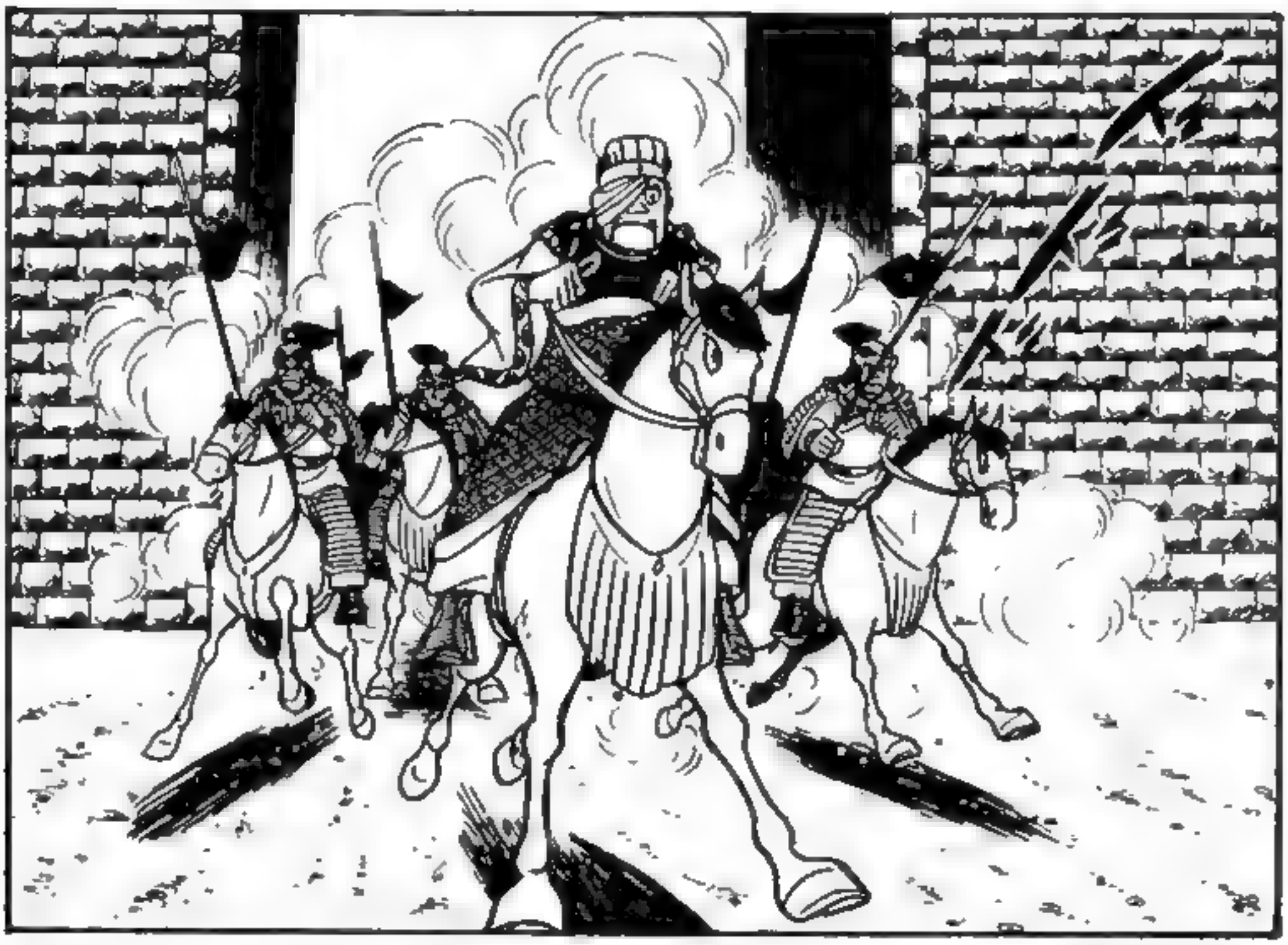


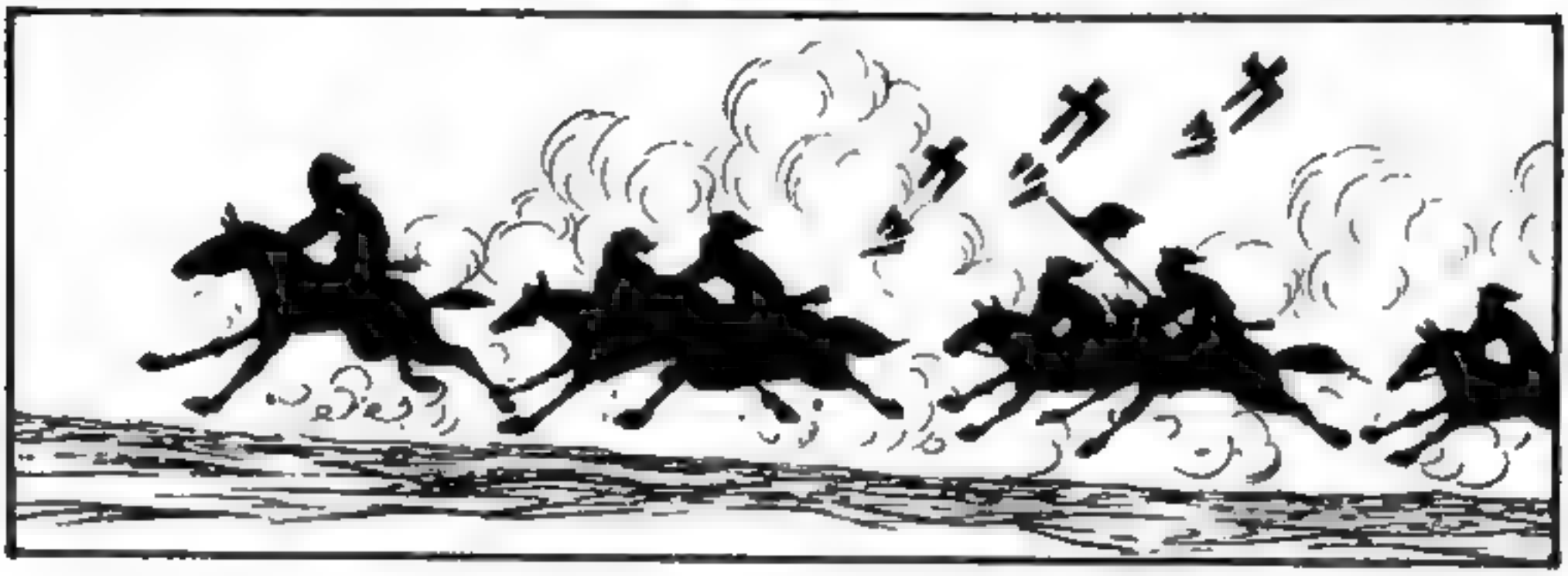


AH, THAT'S ZHANG FEI!

AFTER HIM, DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!

I SHALL CLEAR AWAY MY SHAME FOR RECEIVING THIS DISGRACEFUL MARK ON MY FACE!





GENERAL, WE ARE BEING PURSUED!

AH!

WHY THAT'S... CAO BAO!

IT IS AS YOU SAY, SIR.

THAT BASTARD ...!

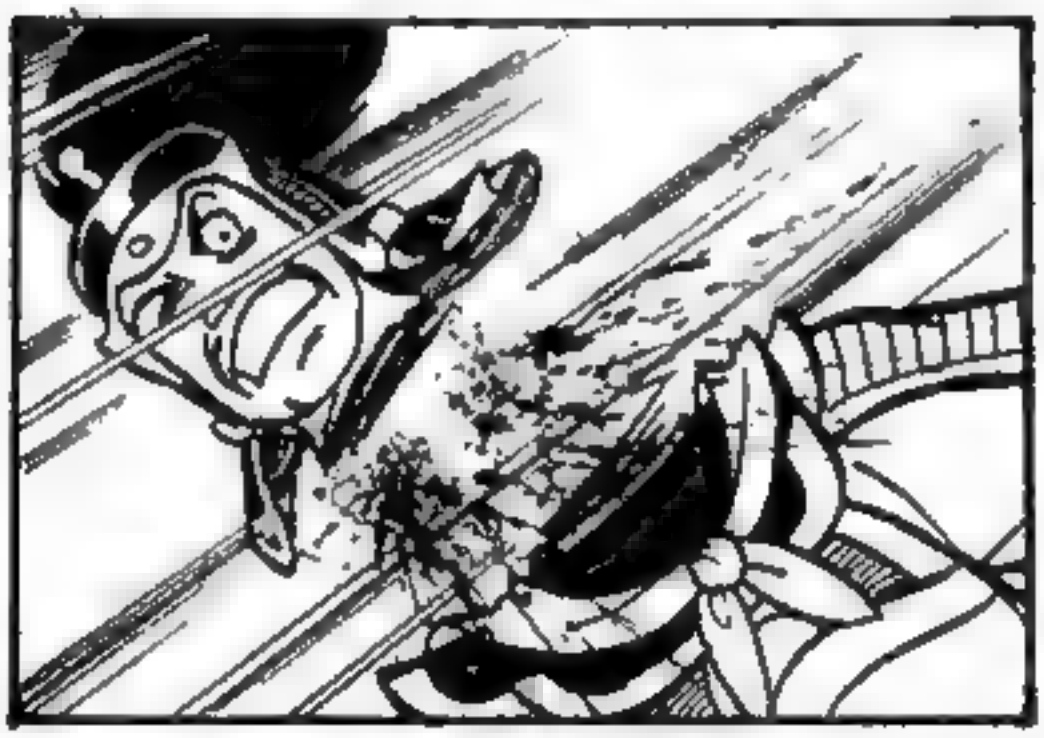
HE MUST'VE SOLD US OUT!

G-GENERAL!

ZHANG FEI SHALL NOT FORGIVE ANY WHO BETRAYS MY LORD!

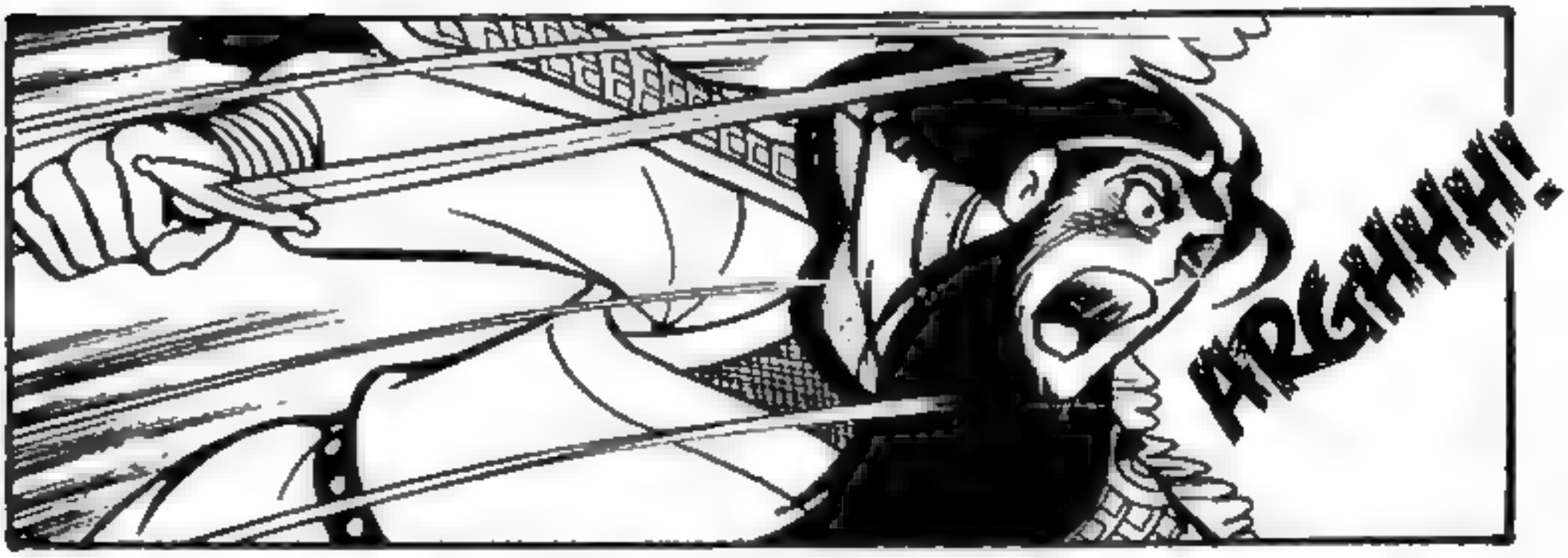
KILL HIM!

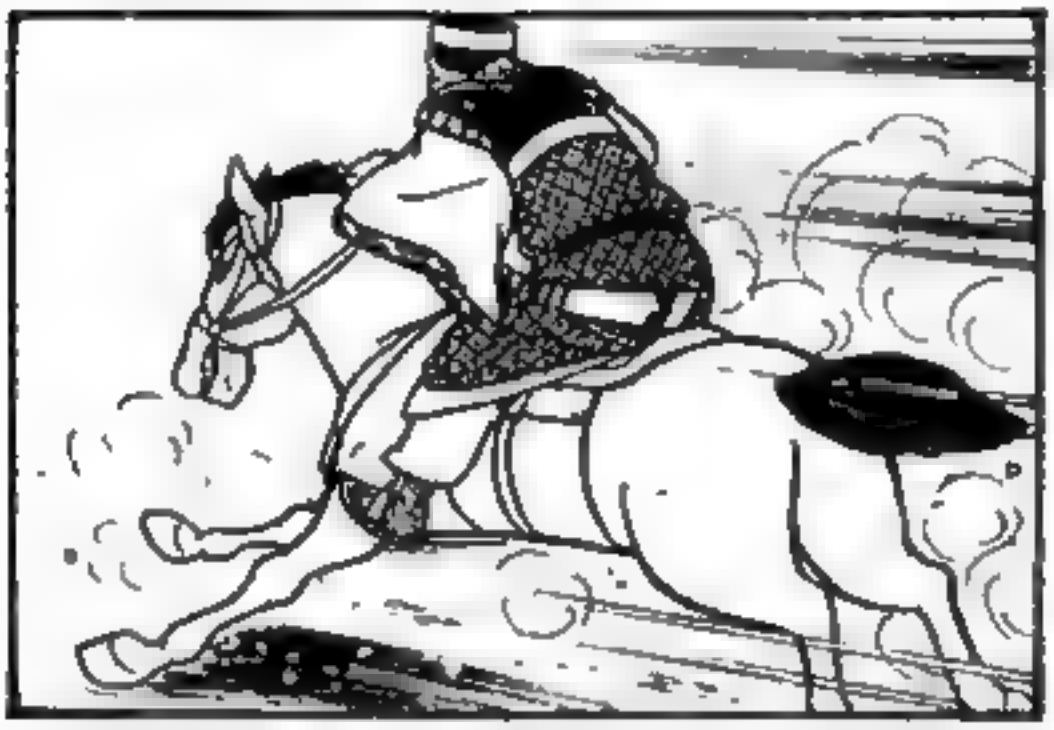
HMPH, IT IS I WHO SHALL NOT FORGIVE YOU FOR LEAVING THIS MARK UPON MY FACE!



S-SHOOT HIM FROM AFAR WITH YOUR ARROWS!

AGHH!


ARGHHHH!



ACK!

YOU THINK I'D REALLY LET YOU ESCAPE!?

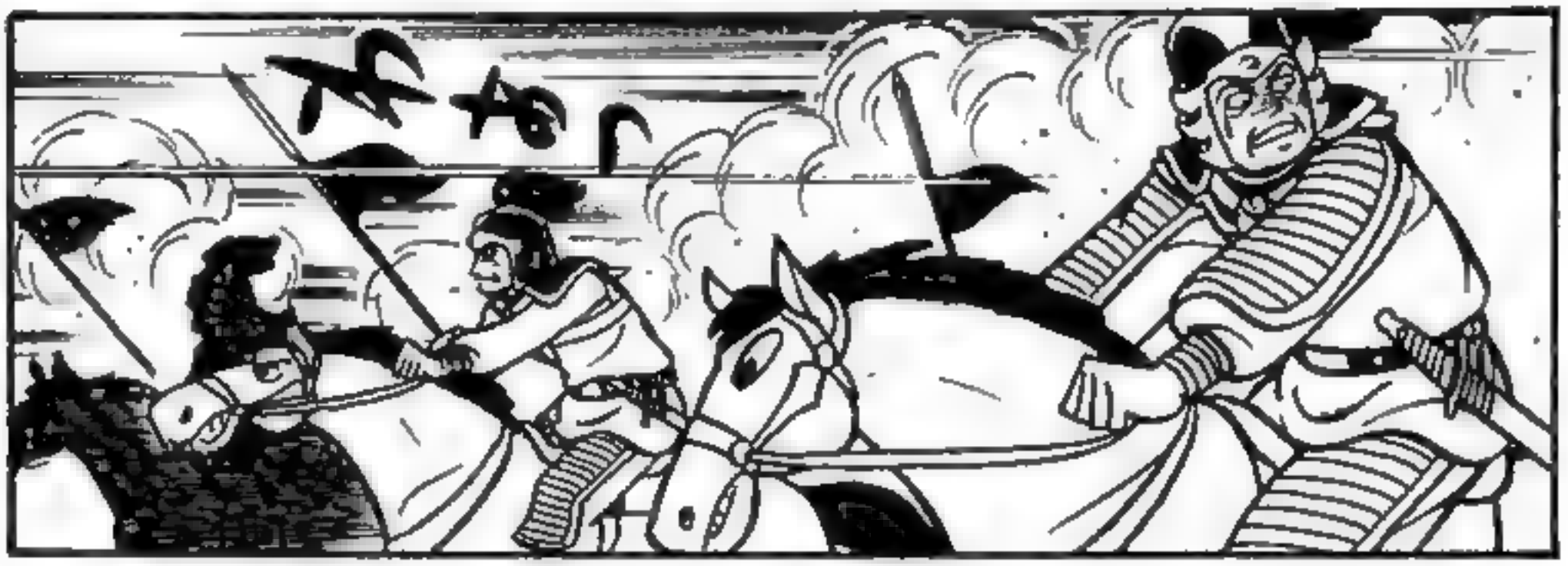
AHHHHHH!!!

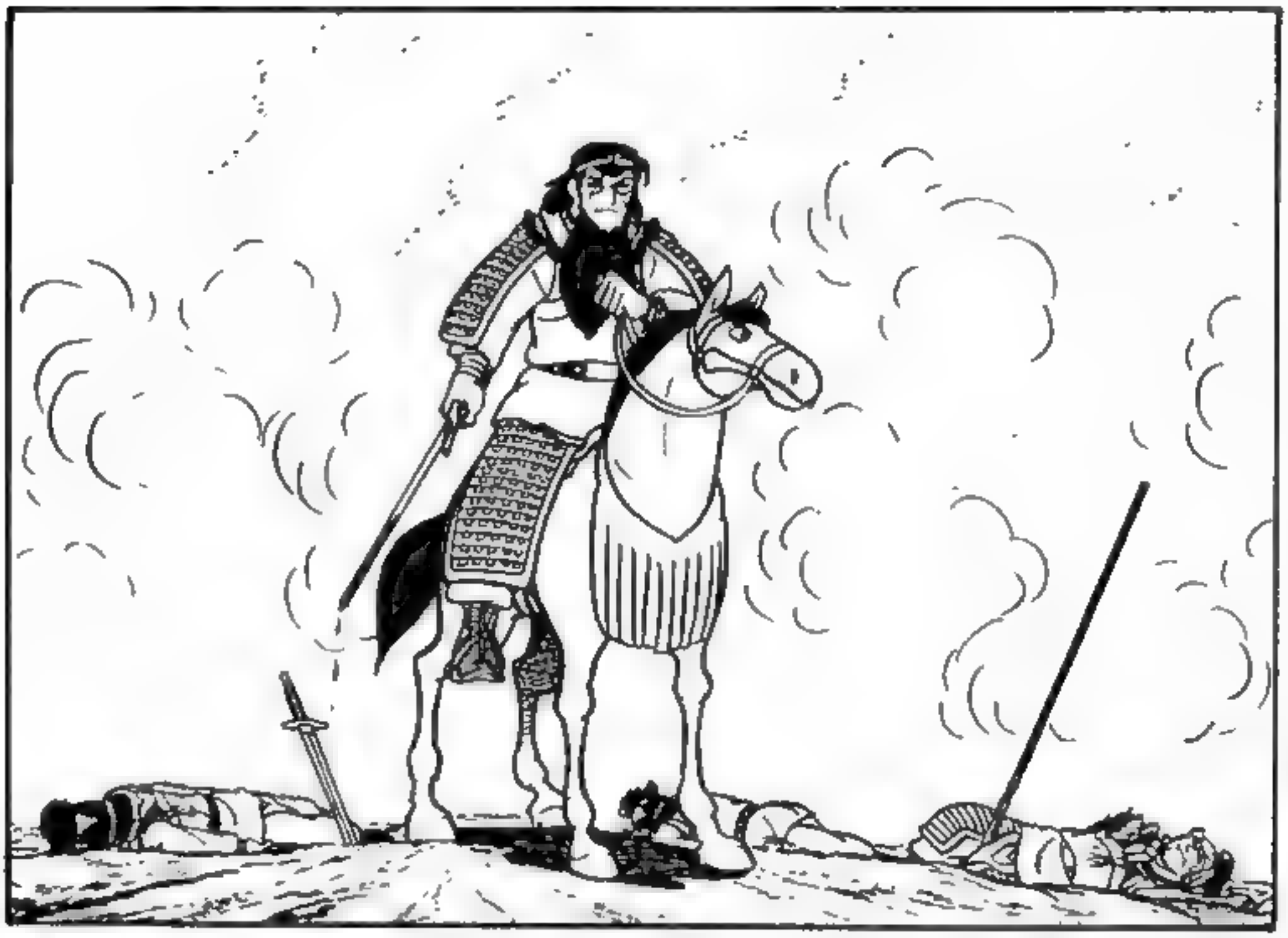
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FACE MY BROTHERS AGAIN IF I DON'T TAKE YOUR HEAD WITH ME...!

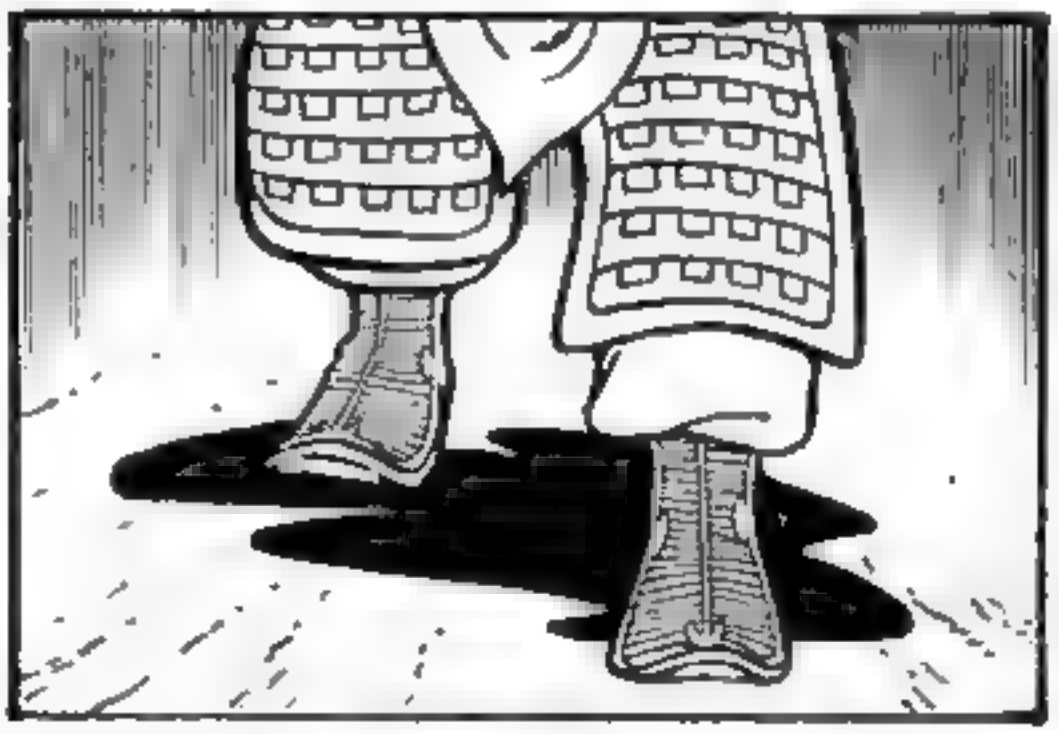
FFF

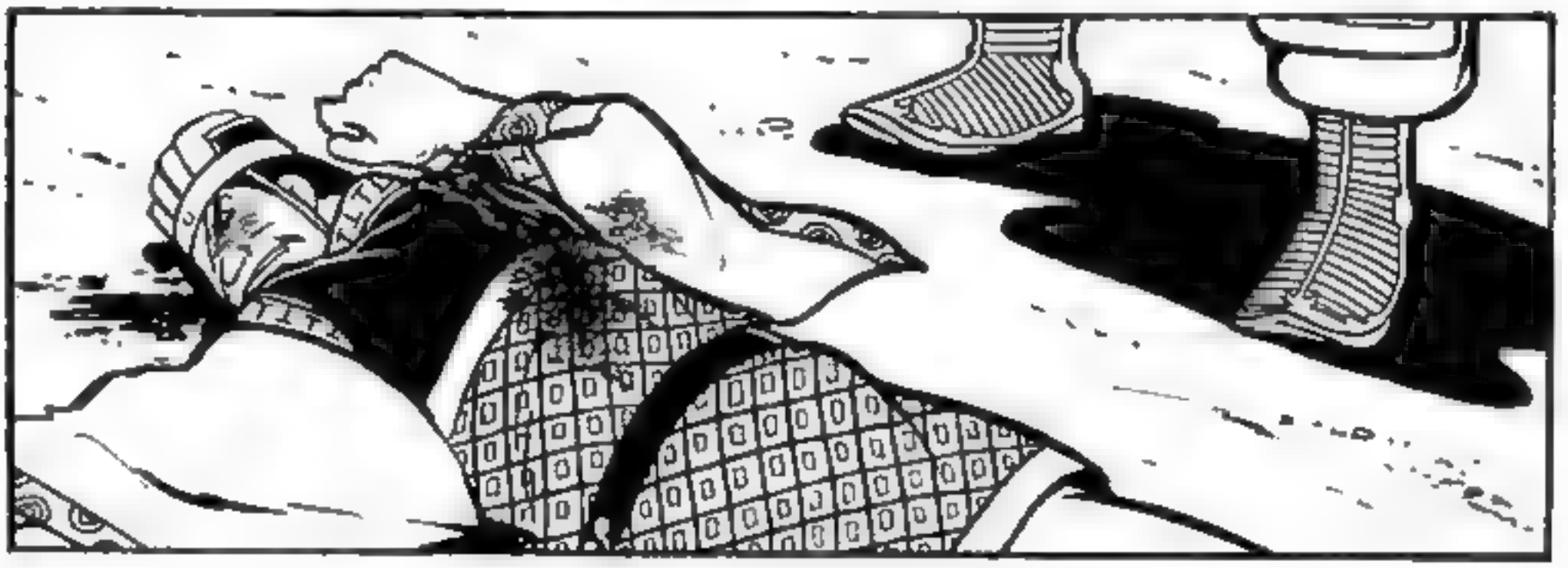
ACK!

AHH...!



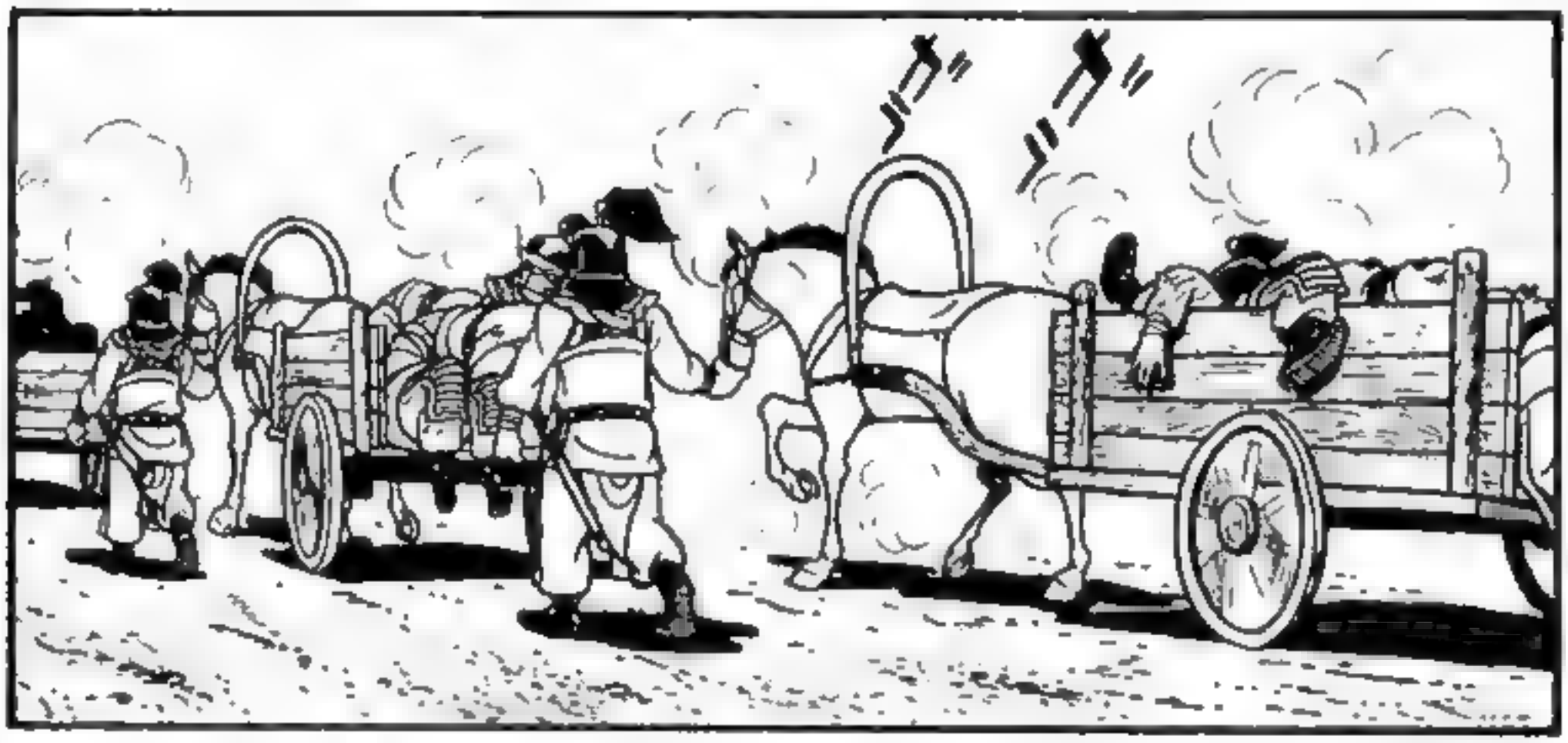






HOW COULD I BE SO FOOLISH...!?
TO THINK THAT JUST A SINGLE GLASS OF WINE WOULD TURN INTO THIS BLOODBATH...

RETREAT



AH, GENERAL!

HAVE THE REST OF THE XUZHOU SOLDIERS BEEN PACIFIED?

IS THAT SO? GOOD WORK THEN.

YES, SIR. THEY HAVE ALL SUBMITTED TO OUR FORCES.

YES SIR, THEY HAVE NOT RUN AWAY FROM XUZHOU.

WHAT! THEY'RE STILL IN THIS CASTLE!?

BY THE WAY SIR, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH XUANDE'S MOTHER AND HIS WIFE?

HMM...

ALRIGHT, I SHALL GO SEE THEM SO LEAD THE WAY.

GOOD DAY, MESDAMES. I AM LU BU.

.....

PLEASE, THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY AT ALL. I AM NOT A BEAST THAT WOULD KILL INNOCENT WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

THERE IS A REASON BEHIND THE RECENT EVENTS.

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CORRUPT AND SELFISH OFFICIALS BUSY FIGHTING AND ARGUING AMONGST THEMSELVES. IT IS THEY WHO CAUSE THE CITIZENS OF XUZHOU TO SUFFER AND IT IS TO CHASE THEM OUT THAT I DECIDED TO STAND UP!

THAT'S RIGHT, I SHOULD LET THE CITIZENS KNOW THAT AS WELL...

NOW THAT I'VE ACCOMPLISHED THAT, THERE IS NO NEED TO WORRY.

I SHALL DO SO RIGHT AWAY, SIR.

I WANT YOU TO PUT UP A NOTICE OF WHAT I JUST SAID TO LET THE PEOPLE KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT IN ANY DANGER AND THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE LIVING PEACEFULLY.

.....

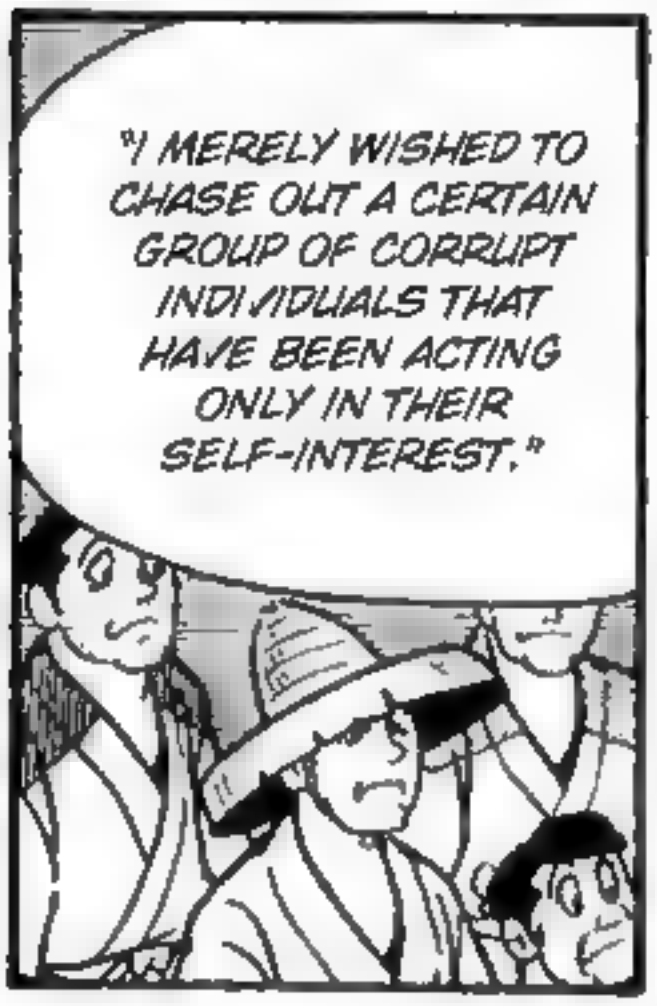
YES, SIR.

AND I WANT GUARDS PLACED HERE TO PROTECT LIU BEI'S MOTHER AND HIS WIFE.

.....

WHEW... I'M NO GOOD WITH WOMEN ...

IT SEEMS LIKE A NEW NOTICE...
HUH, WHAT'S THAT?


"I MERELY WISHED TO CHASE OUT A CERTAIN GROUP OF CORRUPT INDIVIDUALS THAT HAVE BEEN ACTING ONLY IN THEIR SELF-INTEREST."

YEAH ALRIGHT, DON'T RUSH ME.
"I HAVE LONG BEEN INDEBTED TO LORD LIU BEI AND I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN OF HIS KINDNESS TOWARDS ME."
WHAT DOES IT SAY? HURRY UP AND READ IT.

I SEE...

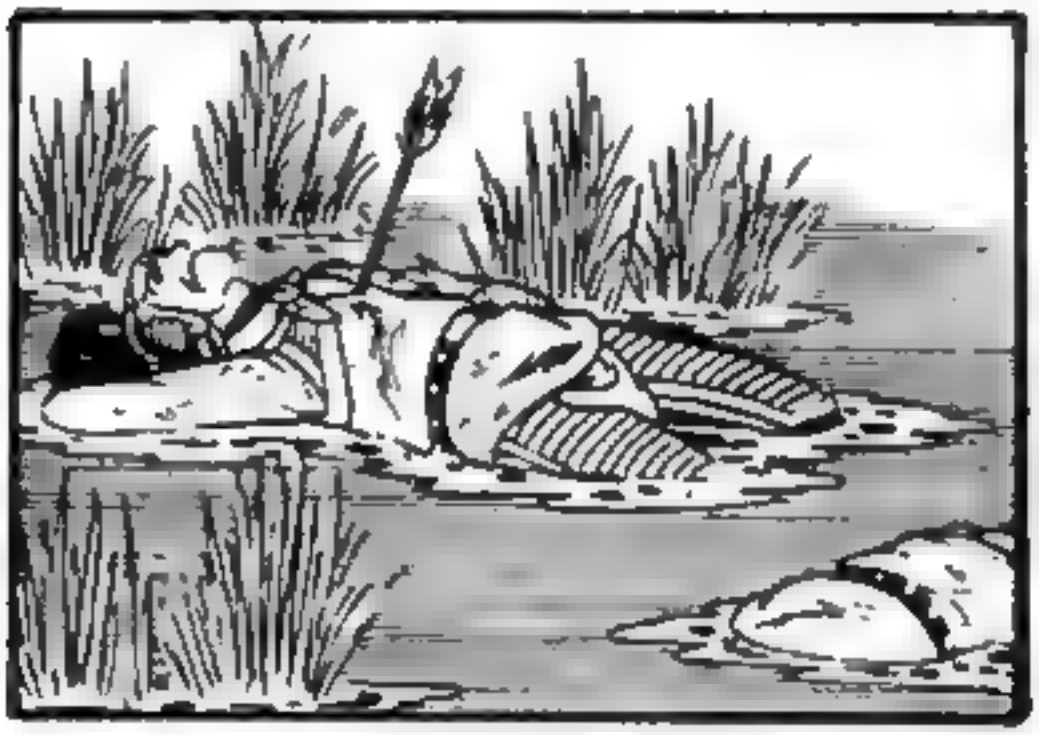
SO BASICALLY HE'S TELLING US NOT TO WORRY AND CONTINUE LIVING AS NORMAL.

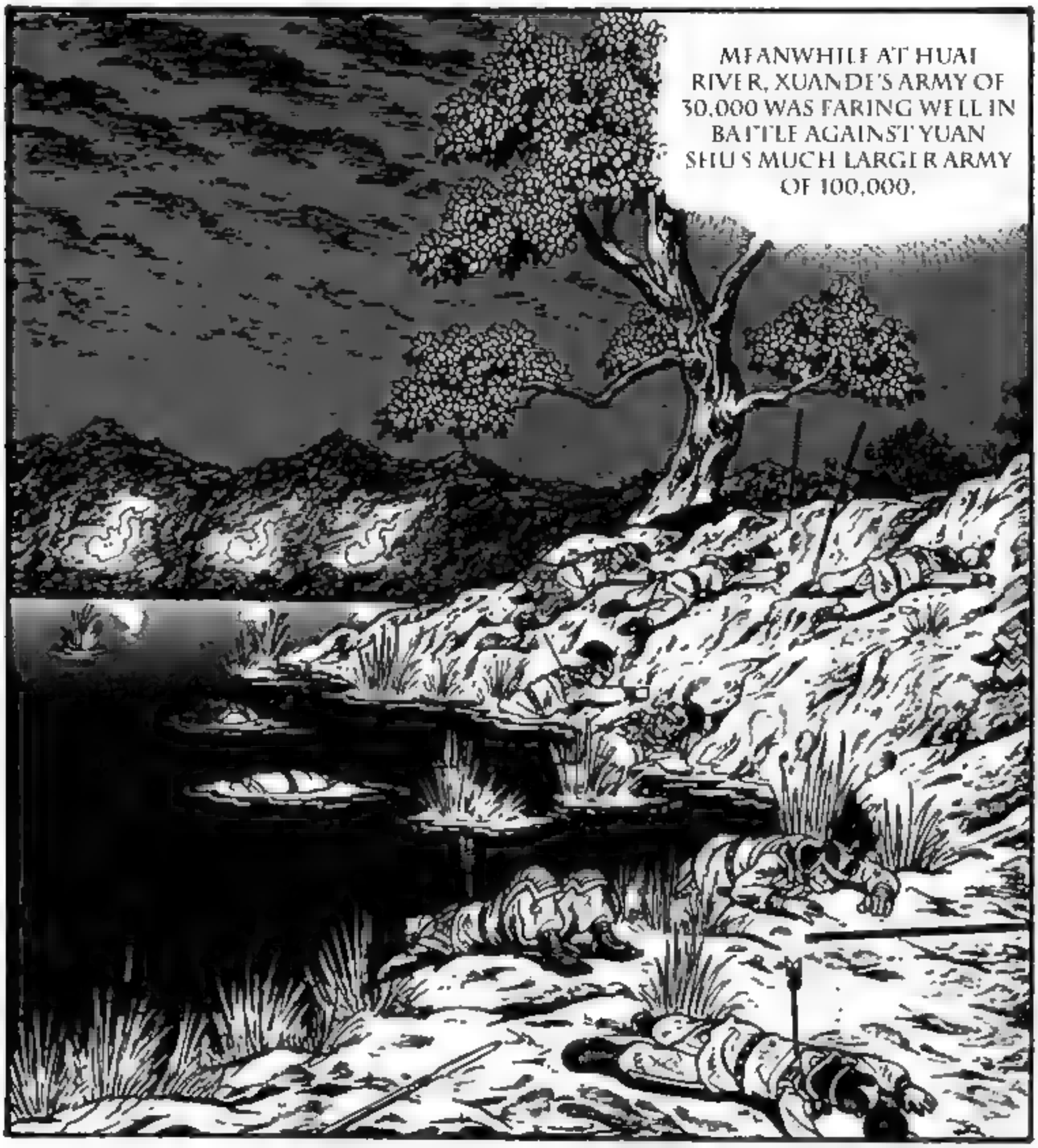
NAH, YOU CAN'T JUST GO TRUSTING THAT SIGN.

I GUESS I WAS FOOLISH IN THINKING THAT LU BU JUST TOOK OVER XUZHOU BECAUSE IT'D BE EASY TO DO SO WHILE OUR GOVERNOR WAS AWAY.

YEAH, YOU NEVER KNOW WITH LU BU. LOWER YOUR GUARD DOWN AND HE'LL ATTACK YOU EVEN IF YOU'RE HIS FATHER!

HMM...




MEANWHILE AT HUAI RIVER, XUANDE'S ARMY OF 30,000 WAS FARING WELL IN BATTLE AGAINST YUAN SHU'S MUCH LARGER ARMY OF 100,000.

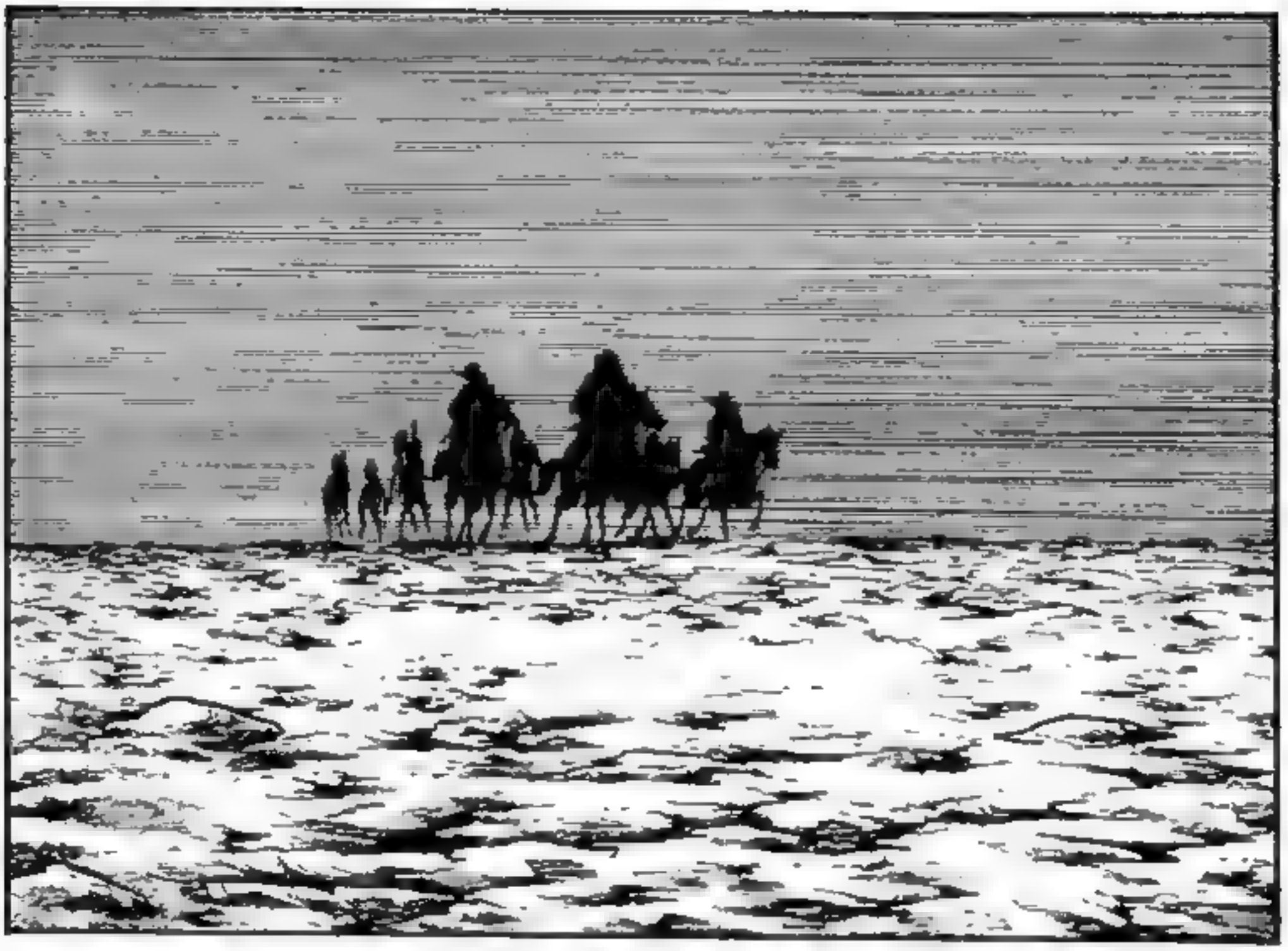
NONE AT ALL, SIR.

ANYTHING TO REPORT?

HMM?

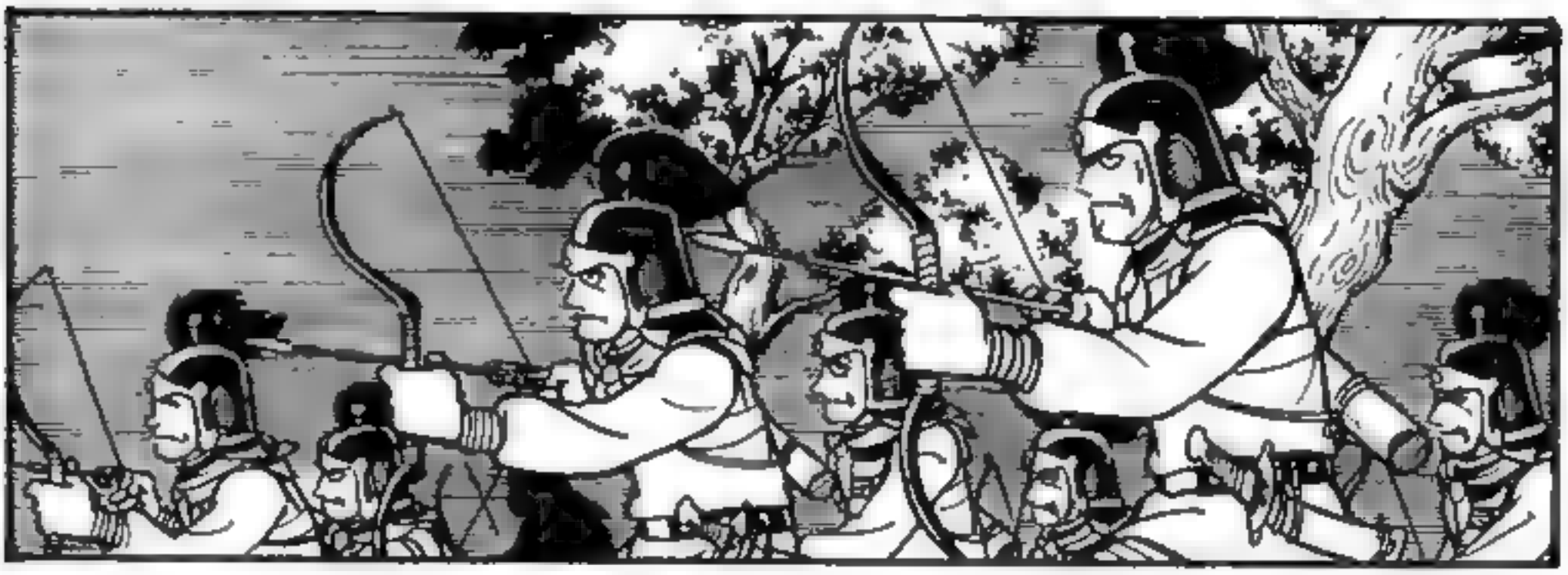
YES, SIR!

BE SURE NOT TO LET YOUR GUARD DOWN. THEY MIGHT TRY A NIGHT RAID AT ANY TIME.



THEY MAY BE ENEMIES, ARCHERS AT THE READY!

SOMEONE IS COMING NEAR...



BUT WHAT IS HE DOING HERE. .? ISN'T HE SUP-POSED TO BE GUARDING XUZHOU NOW...?

IT'S GENERAL ZHANG FEI AND HIS MEN! LOWER YOUR BOWS.

ZHANG FEI! FOR WHAT REASON DID YOU COME HERE FOR!?

PLEASE CALL OUT BROTHER XUANDE OUT AS WELL.
I AM TOO EMBARRASSED TO EVEN LOOK AT THE FACES OF MY BROTHERS AFTER MY IGNOMINIOUS ACTS. BUT I MUST ENDURE SUCH PETTY FEELINGS OF MINE AND MAKE AN URGENT REPORT.

ALRIGHT, HOLD ON.

HE'S ACTING QUITE STRANGE...

BUT HE SHOULD BE CURRENTLY GUARDING XUZHOU... WHY WOULD HE...?

JUDGING FROM HIS EXPRESSION, I BELIEVE THINGS DO NOT FOREBODE WELL.

WHAT?

BROTHER! ZHANG FEI HAS SHOWN UP AT OUR BASE!

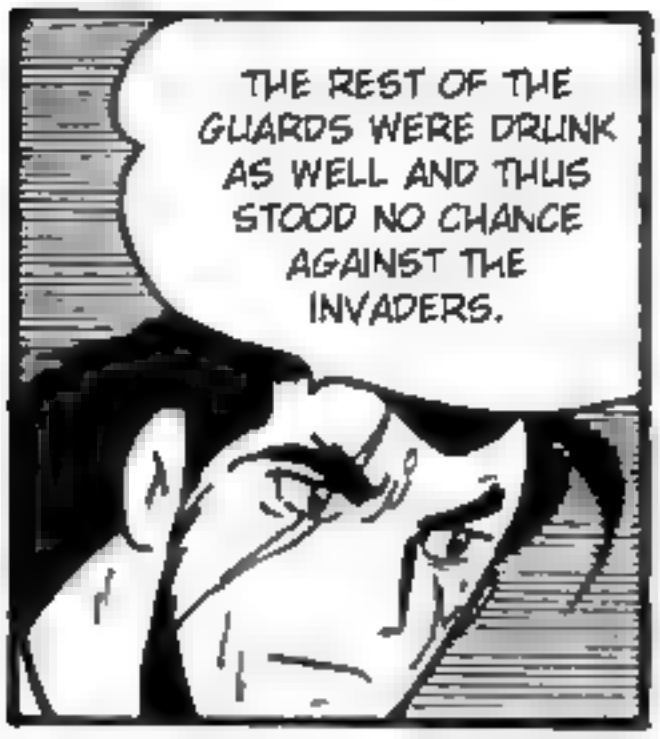
ZHANG FEI, WHAT IS THIS URGENT REPORT YOU HAVE?

I'VE COMMITTED AN UNFORGI-VABLE ERR.

I HAVE LOST XUZHOU TO LU BU.

UNFORGIVABLE IT MAY BE, BUT I AM STILL CONFUSED AS TO WHAT THAT ERR EXACTLY IS.

WHAT!?


THE REST OF THE GUARDS WERE DRUNK AS WELL AND THUS STOOD NO CHANCE AGAINST THE INVADERS.

I BROKE MY PROMISE WITH BROTHER BY DRINKING AND THEN ROUGHING UP A SUBORDINATE IN MY DRUNKEN STUPOR. THAT MISTREATED SUBORDINATE THEN PERSUADED LU BU TO ATTACK WHILE I WAS STILL DRUNK.

I... THAT IS

AND WHAT OF MY MOTHER AND WIFE?

WHAT!?

BEING TOO DRUNK TO BE ABLE TO THINK PROPERLY, I DID NOT EVEN THINK OF RESCUING THEM...

YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT YOU ONLY SAVED YOUR OWN SKIN AND HAVE LEFT OUR LORD'S MOTHER AND WIFE IN THE HANDS OF LU BU!?
YES, I ADMIT IT!

I MERELY WISHED TO REPORT WHAT HAPPENED. AND NOW THAT I'VE DONE THAT...

I DID NOT ESCAPE BECAUSE I VALUE MY LIFE SO DEARLY...

I SHALL KILL MYSELF FOR MY UNFORGIVABLE BLUNDER!

CEASE THIS FOOLISH ACT AT ONCE!

ZHANG FEI! EVEN IF YOU WERE TO KILL YOURSELF, THAT WILL NOT MEAN THAT MY MOTHER AND WIFE WILL COME BACK TO ME SAFELY!

YOU FOOL! JUST WHAT WOULD KILLING YOURSELF SOLVE!?

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO DIE, BROTHER! JUST HOW CAN I LIVE WITH THIS SHAME!?

WE ARE ALL FLAWED MEN. EACH OF US HAVE OUR STRENGTHS AND WEAK-NESSES. BUT BECAUSE WE COMPLEMENT OUR FLAWS, WE CAN CALL OURSELVES TRUE BROTHERS.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN OF OUR OATH THAT WE THREE BROTHERS WOULD DIE ON THE SAME DAY, ZHANG FEI...!?

SHOULD THE GARMENT HAPPEN TO TEAR, IT CAN BE MENDED. BUT HOW CAN A LOST LIMB EVER BE REATTACHED!?

AS THE OLD PROVERB GOES, WIVES ARE LIKE GARMENTS BUT YOUR BROTHERS ARE LIKE LIMBS.

IF YOU FEEL DISGRACED, THEN LIVE ON AND SEEK A CHANCE TO CLEANSE YOUR HONOUR!

I AM ONLY HUMAN MYSELF. SO HOW COULD I DEMAND THAT MY BROTHERS BE PERFECT WHEN I AM NOT!?

ZHANG FEI COULD ONLY CRY LIKE A CHILD.

DO YOU UNDER-STAND, ZHANG FEI?

YES...

GOOD.

THERE IS STILL A LITTLE UNREST, BUT FOR THE MOST PART, YES, MY LORD.
HAVE THE CITIZENS SETTLED DOWN AS WELL?

OUR NEXT STEP NOW IS TO RAISE AN ARMY.

SIR!

NANYANG? YOU MEAN FROM YUAN SHU?

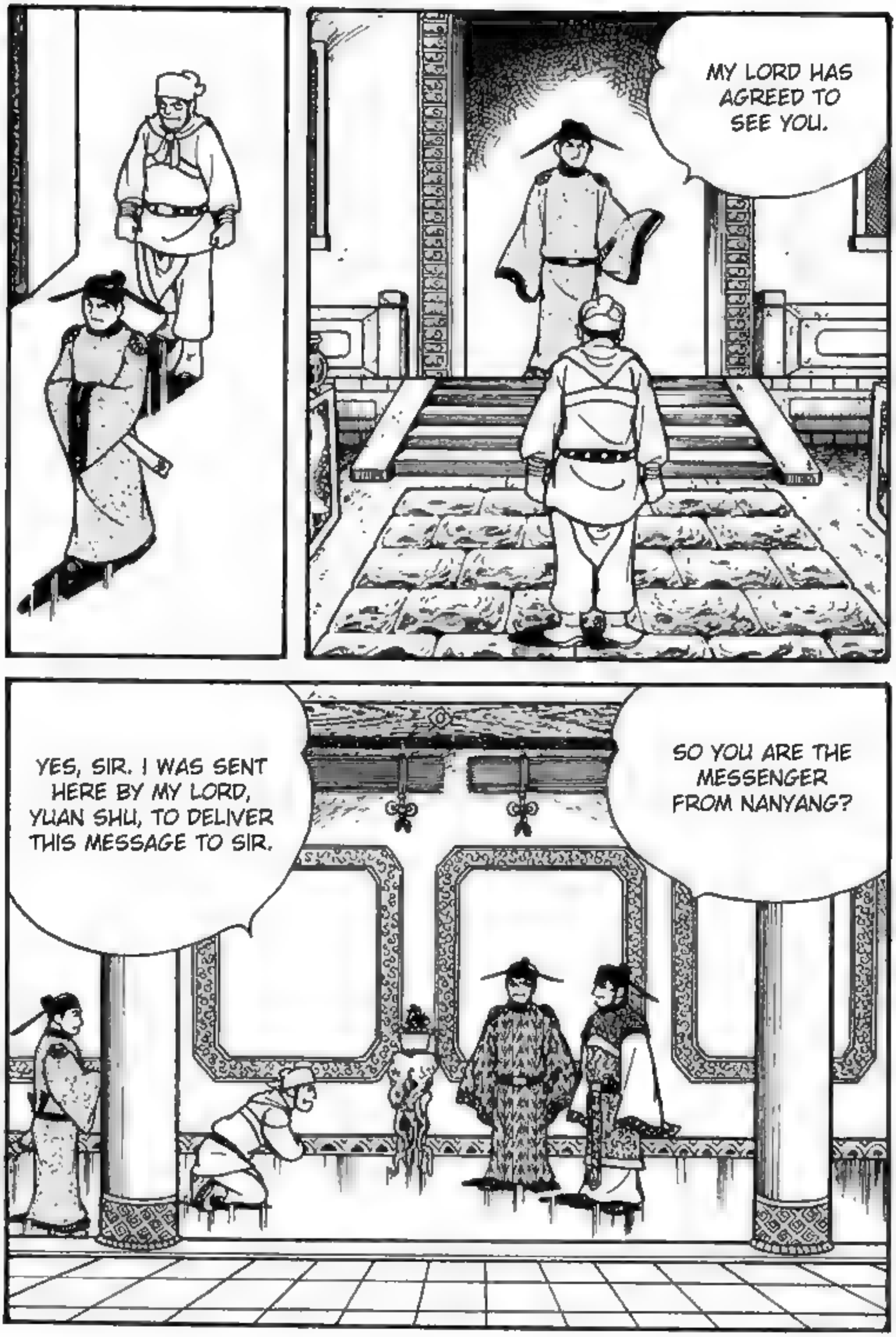
A SECRET MESSENGER HAS ARRIVED FROM NANYANG.

WHAT IS IT?

YES, SIR.

YES, SIR.

ALRIGHT, LET HIM IN.


MY LORD HAS AGREED TO SEE YOU.
YES, SIR. I WAS SENT HERE BY MY LORD, YUAN SHU, TO DELIVER THIS MESSAGE TO SIR.
SO YOU ARE THE MESSENGER FROM NANYANG?

YES, SIR.

ALRIGHT, GIVE IT HERE THEN.

WHAT DOES IT SAY, MY LORD?

?

HMM...

YUAN SHU ASKS THAT I ATTACK XUANDE FROM THE REAR.

IF I CHOOSE TO AGREE AND IT RESULTS IN HIS VICTORY, HE PROMISES TO GIVE 50,000 CARTS OF GRAIN, 500 HORSES, 10,000 TAELS* OF GOLD AND SILVER, AND 1000 ROLLS OF SILK.

*CHINESE UNIT OF MASS ROUGHLY 37.8 GRAMS 1 TAEL = 1/16 OF A CATTY

SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY TAKEN XUZHOU, IT IS DANGEROUS TO LEAVE LIU BEI AND HIS ARMY ALONE. NOW WOULD BE THE BEST TIME TO CRUSH THEM, MY LORD.

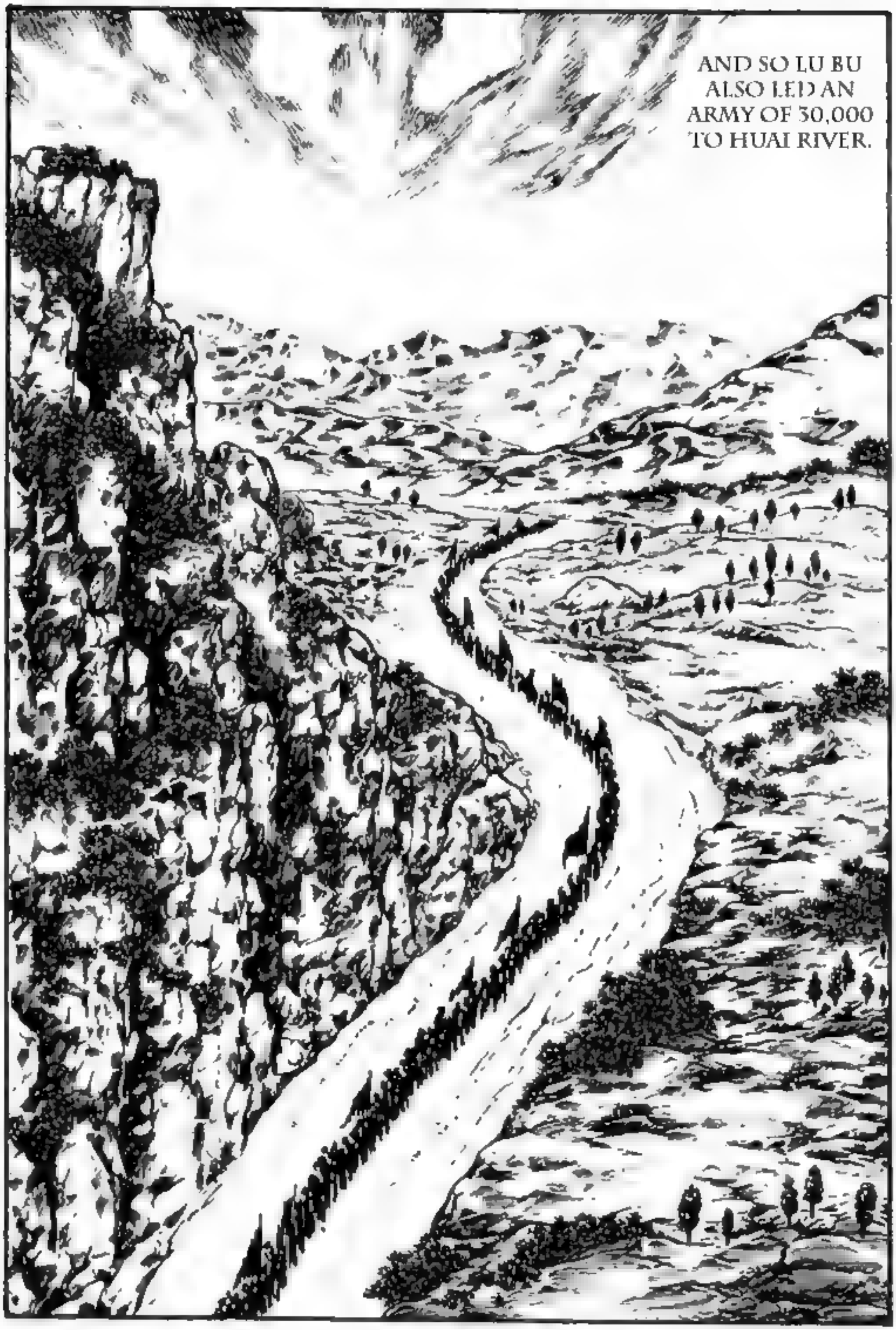
A MOST EXCELLENT OFFER. I SUGGEST THAT WE ACCEPT RIGHT AWAY.

YES, SIR.

I THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING THIS MESSAGE. REPORT BACK TO YUAN SHU THAT LU BU WILL ACCEPT HIS OFFER.

YES, MY LORD.

PREPARE TO MOBILIZE THE MEN AT ONCE.


AND SO LU BU
ALSO LED AN
ARMY OF 30,000
TO HUAI RIVER.

LU BU HAS ORDERED GENERAL GAO SHUN TO LEAD AN ARMY OF 30,000.

MNN...

YES, SIR.

WHAT!? LU BU'S ARMY IS HEADING HERE TO ATTACK!?

BROTHER, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO DEAL WITH LU BU'S ARMY!

THAT BASTARD ...!

WAIT, WAIT!

YES, PLEASE ALLOW US A CHANCE TO WASH AWAY OUR DISGRACE!

THIS WILL ONLY BE A LOSING BATTLE FOR US.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BE RASH! IN FRONT OF US IS YUAN SHU'S ARMY OF 100,000 AND BEHIND US IS LU BU'S ARMY OF 30,000! SINCE WE ONLY NUMBER AT 30,000 WE ARE CLEARLY DISADVANTAGED!

WE WILL RETREAT.

THEN WHAT DOES OUR LORD SUGGEST WE DO?

A BETTER CHANCE AWAITS THOSE WHO LIVE TO SEE ANOTHER DAY.

BUT SIR...!

SO I HOPE THE REST OF YOU MEN CAN UNDER-STAND.

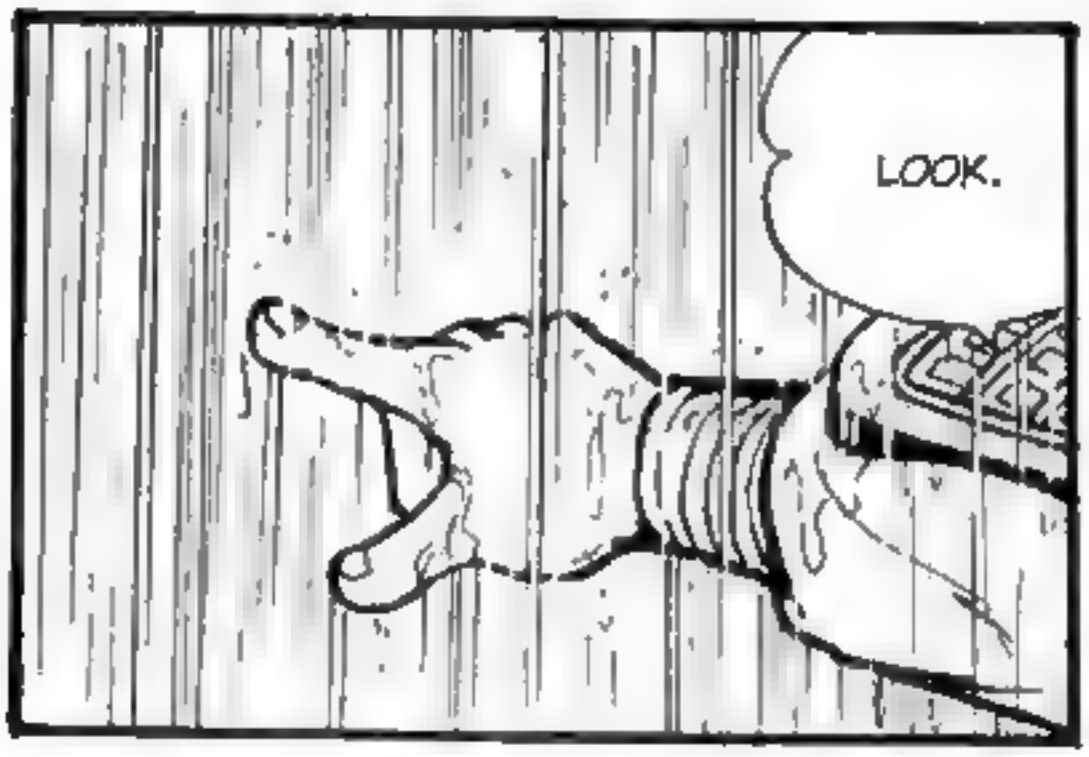
IT IS SHAMEFUL TO SHOW YOUR BACK TO YOUR ENEMIES, BUT LIVING ANOTHER DAY WILL ALLOW US A CHANCE TO WASH AWAY THIS DISGRACE.

ZHANG FEI, I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE TO LIVE ON AND SEEK A CHANCE TO CLEANSE YOUR HONOUR...

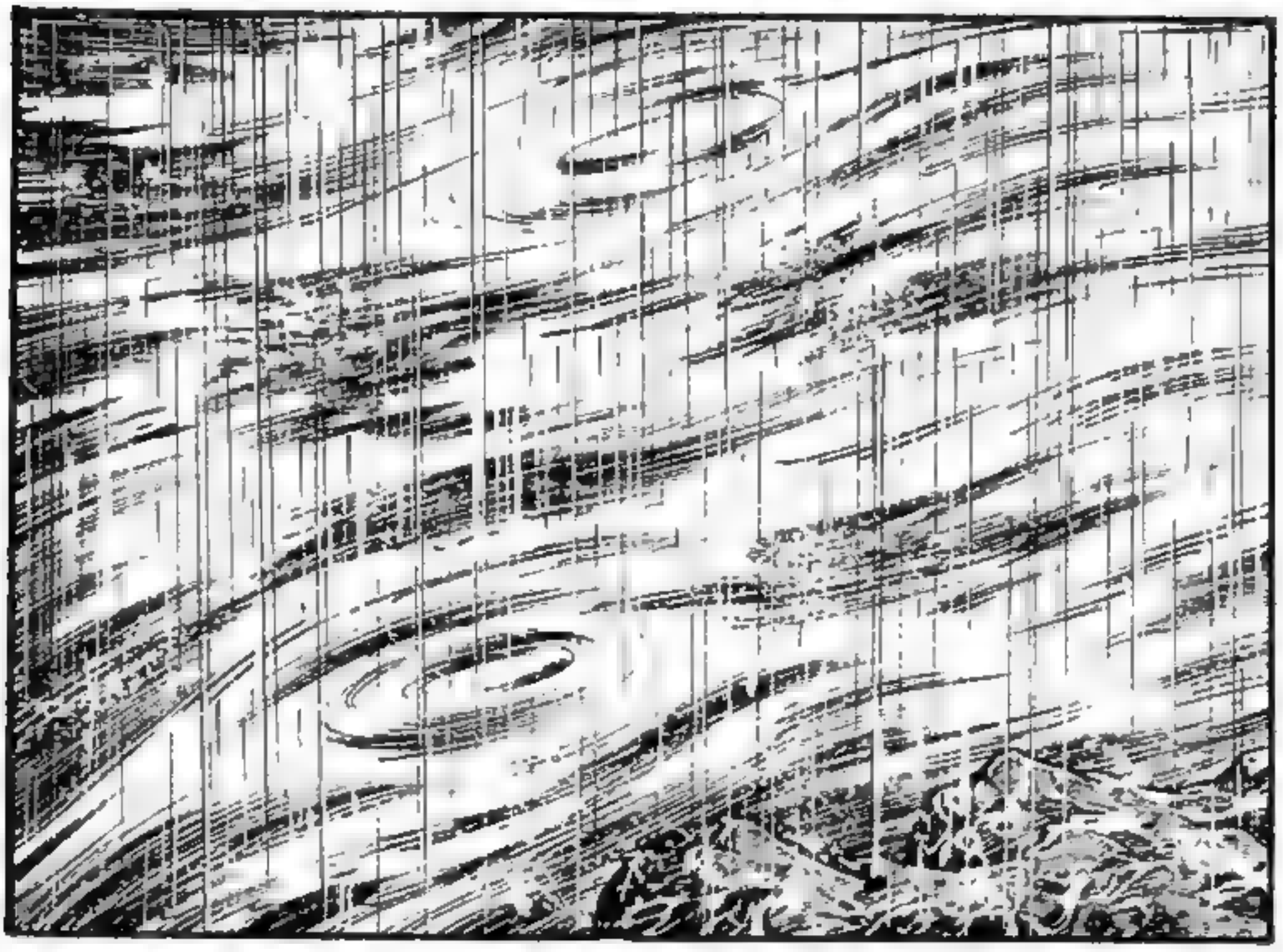
WE SHALL RETREAT AS YOU SAY, BROTHER.

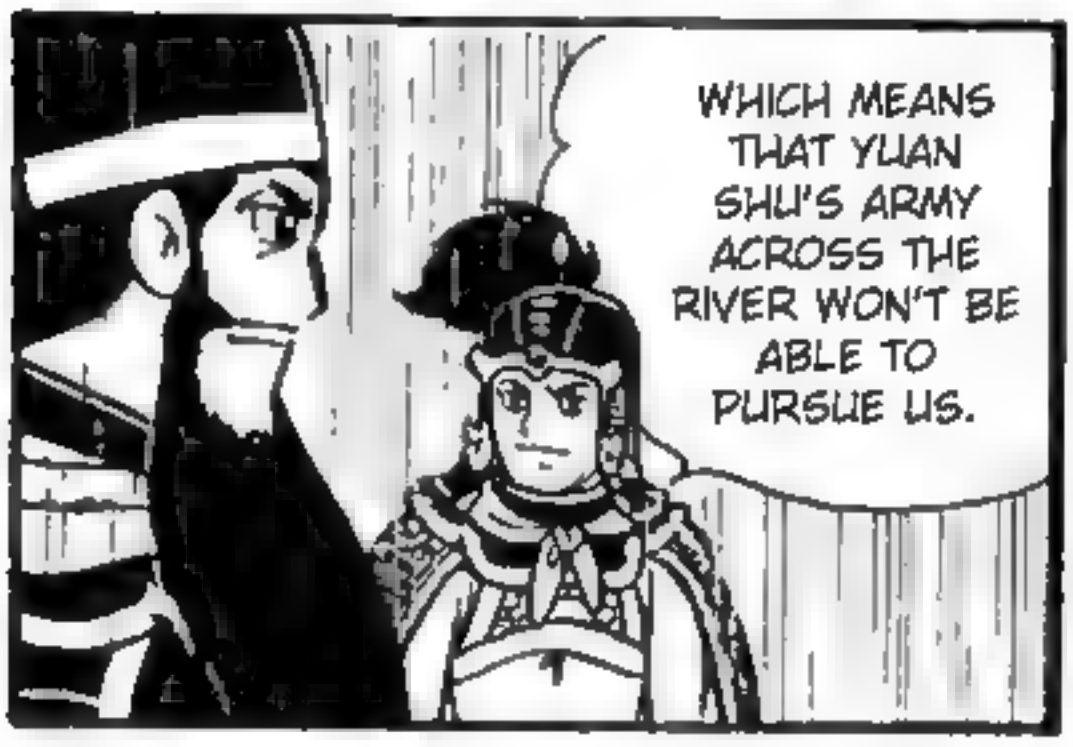
IF OUR LORD DOES NOT WISH TO FIGHT, THEN WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE BUT TO FOLLOW SIR'S ORDERS?

BROTHER, WHAT ARE YOU DOING ALL ALONE OUTSIDE IN THIS DOWNPOUR?


LOOK.

HMM?
THE HEAVENS HAVE YET TO ABANDON US.




WHICH MEANS THAT YUAN SHU'S ARMY ACROSS THE RIVER WON'T BE ABLE TO PURSUE US.

THIS HEAVY DOWN-POUR WILL OVER-FLOOD THE RIVERS AND SOON, THE ENEMY SOLDIERS AND HORSES WILL BE UNABLE TO CROSS THE RIVER.

UNDERSTOOD, BROTHER.

NOW WILL BE OUR BEST CHANCE TO RETREAT. GIVE THE ORDER TO THE MEN.

A DRAGON BIDES HIS TIME UNDERNEATH THE WATER FOR THE RIGHT TIME TO SOAR INTO THE HEAVENS.

I BELIEVE THEY MADE THEIR RETREAT DURING LAST NIGHT'S STORM.

CURSES! WE WERE JUST A DAY BEHIND ...

YES SIR. THEY HAVE DISAP-PEARED WITHOUT A TRACE.

WHAT? XUZHOU'S ARMY IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND?

I SHALL GO SEE THEIR COMMA-NDER..

AH THAT'S RIGHT. I MUST MAKE GOOD ON YUAN SHU'S PROMISE TO MY LORD LU BU.

SINCE IT'S COME TO THIS, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO BUT TO RETURN BACK TO XUZHOU.

AND I AM COMMANDER GAO SHUN OF LU BU'S ARMY.

I AM COMMANDER JI LING OF YUAN SHU'S ARMY.

?

AND SO I AM HERE TO SEE THAT YOUR SIDE KEEPS YOUR END OF THE DEAL.

AS YOU CAN SEE, XUANDE'S ARMY HAS FLED DURING LAST NIGHT'S STORM.

DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAME ALL THE WAY OVER HERE TO HELP YOU ATTACK XUANDE OUT OF THE GOODNESS IN OUR HEARTS...!?

WHAT!?

DEAL? WHAT DEAL? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

YOUR LORD PROMISED US 50,000 CARTS OF GRAIN, 500 HORSES, 10,000 TAELS OF GOLD AND SILVER, AND 1000 ROLLS OF SILK IF WE AGREED TO HELP YOUR SIDE OUT!

YOUR LORD HAS PROMISED TO REWARD US, SHOULD WE LEAD YOUR ARMY TO VICTORY!

I APOLOGIZE BUT I HAVE NOT YET HEARD OF THIS PROMISE YOU SPEAK OF BETWEEN MY LORD AND LU BU.

IT IS CLEAR THAT WE HAVE BROUGHT VICTORY TO YOUR SIDE!

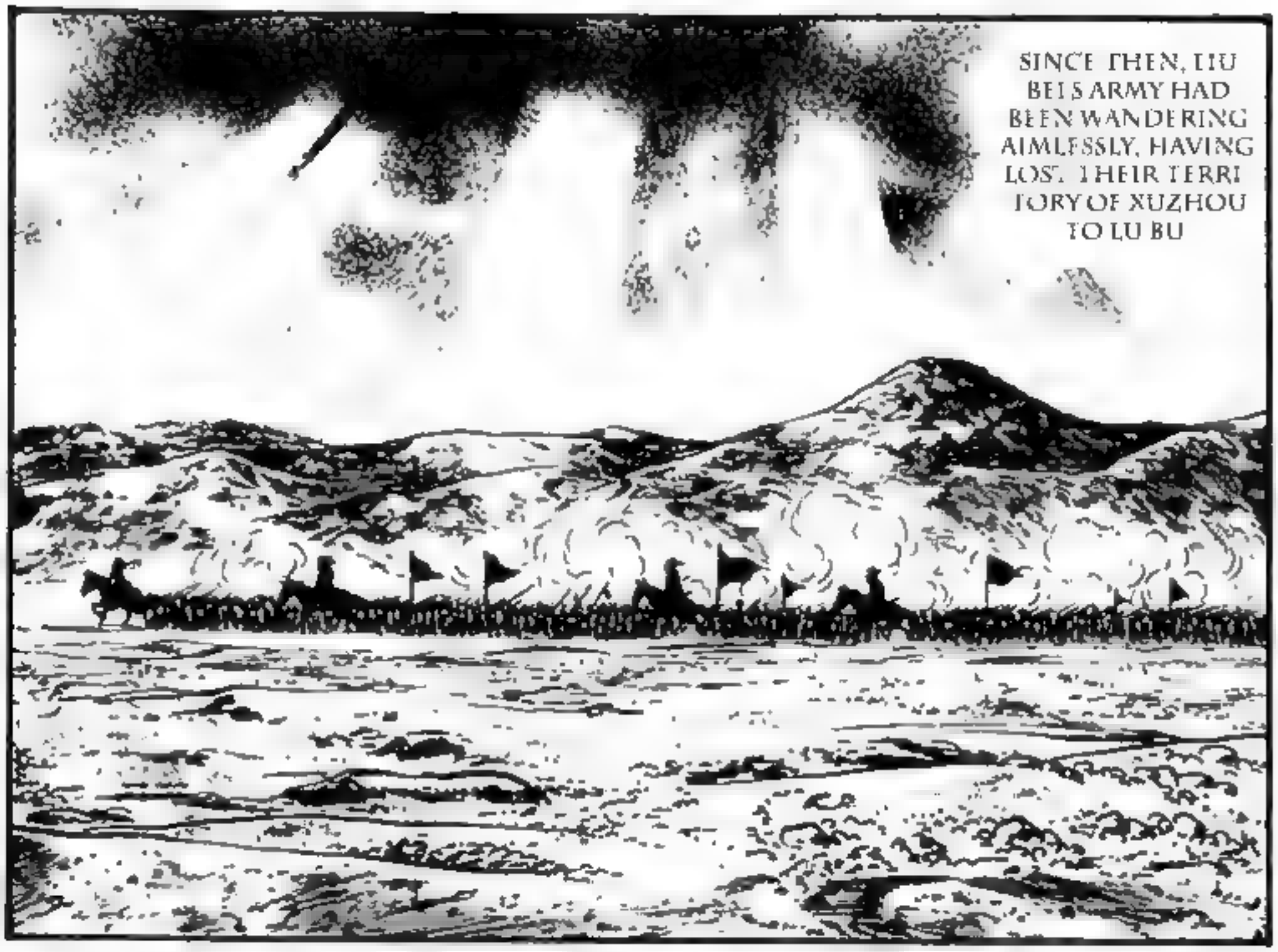
LIU BEI'S ARMY HAD BEEN FIGHTING EVENLY WITH YOUR ARMY OF 100,000 UNTIL NOW. BUT AS SOON AS WE SHOWED UP, THEY RAN AWAY WITH THEIR TAILS BETWEEN THEIR LEGS!

MNN...

I UNDERSTAND GENERAL'S FEELINGS WELL. BUT I SWEAR ON MY HONOUR THAT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HEARD OF SUCH A PROMISE. PLEASE ALLOW ME A LITTLE MORE TIME TO CONFIRM IT WITH MY LORD.

THEN LET US CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION IN THE NEAR FUTURE...

JUST KEEP IT WELL IN MIND WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO BREAK THEIR PROM-ISES.


SINCE THEN, LIU BEI'S ARMY HAD BEEN WANDERING AIMLESSLY, HAVING LOST THEIR TERRITORY OF XUZHOU TO LU BU

ONE BY ONE, THE SOLDIERS SECRETLY DESERTED THEIR ARMY

ONCE THE SOLDIERS REALIZED THAT THEIR ARMY WAS RUNNING OUT OF FUNDS AND FOOD,

THE NUMBER OF DESERTERS ONLY INCREASED WITH EACH NIGHT

EVENTUALLY, THERE WERE ONLY 50 SOLDIERS THAT STILL REMAINED. LIU BEI HAD BEEN REDUCED TO THE SAME FATE THAT LU BU HAD SUFFERED ONLY A SHORT WHILE AGO

XUZHOU
THAT IMPUDENT BASTARD ...!
NGHH...!

JUST LOOK AT THIS LETTER THAT YUAN SHU SENT!

W-WHAT IS THE MATTER, MY LORD...!?

AS LONG AS I ATTACKED XUANDE FROM THE REAR, HE PROMISED ME TO GIVE ME 5000 CARTS OF GRAIN, 500 HORSES, 10,000 TAELS OF GOLD AND SILVER, AND 1000 ROLLS OF SILK...

XUANDE IS CURRENTLY HIDING AT GUANGLING. GO AND BRING BACK HIS HEAD TO ME.

BUT JUST LOOK AT HIS REPLY!

HE THINKS HE CAN JUST ORDER ME AROUND, DOES HE...!?

ONLY AFTER BRINGING BACK HIS HEAD, SHALL I FULFILL MY PROMISE.

DOES HE TAKE THE MIGHTY LU BU FOR HIS OWN RETAINER!?
EVEN THOUGH THE ORIGINAL PROMISE ONLY ASKED FOR ME TO LEAD MY TROOPS TO HUAI RIVER AND BRING THEM VICTORY, HE CHANGES HIS MIND ON A WHIM AND NOW ASKS ME TO BRING XUANDE'S HEAD!?

PREPARE THE TROOPS TO MOVE OUT!

FORGET XUANDE'S HEAD, I SHALL TAKE THAT ARROGANT YUAN SHU'S HEAD!

I ADVISE SIR TO PLEASE CALM DOWN.

WE STILL LACK THE FUNDS AND MEN NECCESSARY TO TAKE ON NANYANG.

OF COURSE! DO YOU EXPECT ME TO SIT STILL AND BE DISGRACED!?

I-IS MY LORD SERIOUS ABOUT ATTACKING NANYANG...!?

YUAN SHU COULD ALWAYS CALL FOR HELP FROM HIS OLDER BROTHER YUAN SHAO, WHO EVEN LED THAT GREAT ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO.

MOREOVER, MY LORD MUSTN'T FORGET THAT YUAN SHU IS OF THE AFFLUENT AND INFLUENTIAL YUAN FAMILY.

MNNN...

AS VEXING AS IT MAY BE, I SUGGEST SIR TO REFRAIN FROM FIGHTING YUAN SHU FOR THE TIME BEING.

BEING ABLE TO TAKE ON YUAN SHU'S ARMY OF 100000, LIU BEI IS NO ORDINARY MAN.

WHAT!?

I BELIEVE THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO INVITE BACK LIU BEI TO XUZHOU.

IF SIR WISHES TO TAKE ON YUAN SHU AND YUAN SHAO, LIU BEI WILL BE A VALUABLE ALLY. ONCE THOSE TWO THORNS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED, SIR WILL HAVE ALREADY CONQUERED HALF OF THIS KINGDOM.

IF SIR CAN RECALL BACK TO THE TIME WHEN WE WERE WANDERING AIMLESSLY...

B-BUT I JUST STOLE XUZHOU AWAY FROM HIM... WOULD XUANDE REALLY ACCEPT MY OFFER AND COME BACK...?

AS LONG AS SIR OFFERS HIM THE INVITATION...

LIU BEI IS NOW IN THAT SAME PRECARIOUS SITUATION AND HE KNOWS BEST THAT THE ONLY WAY TO SURVIVE IN THESE CHAOTIC TIMES IS TO USE AND BE USED BY OTHERS.

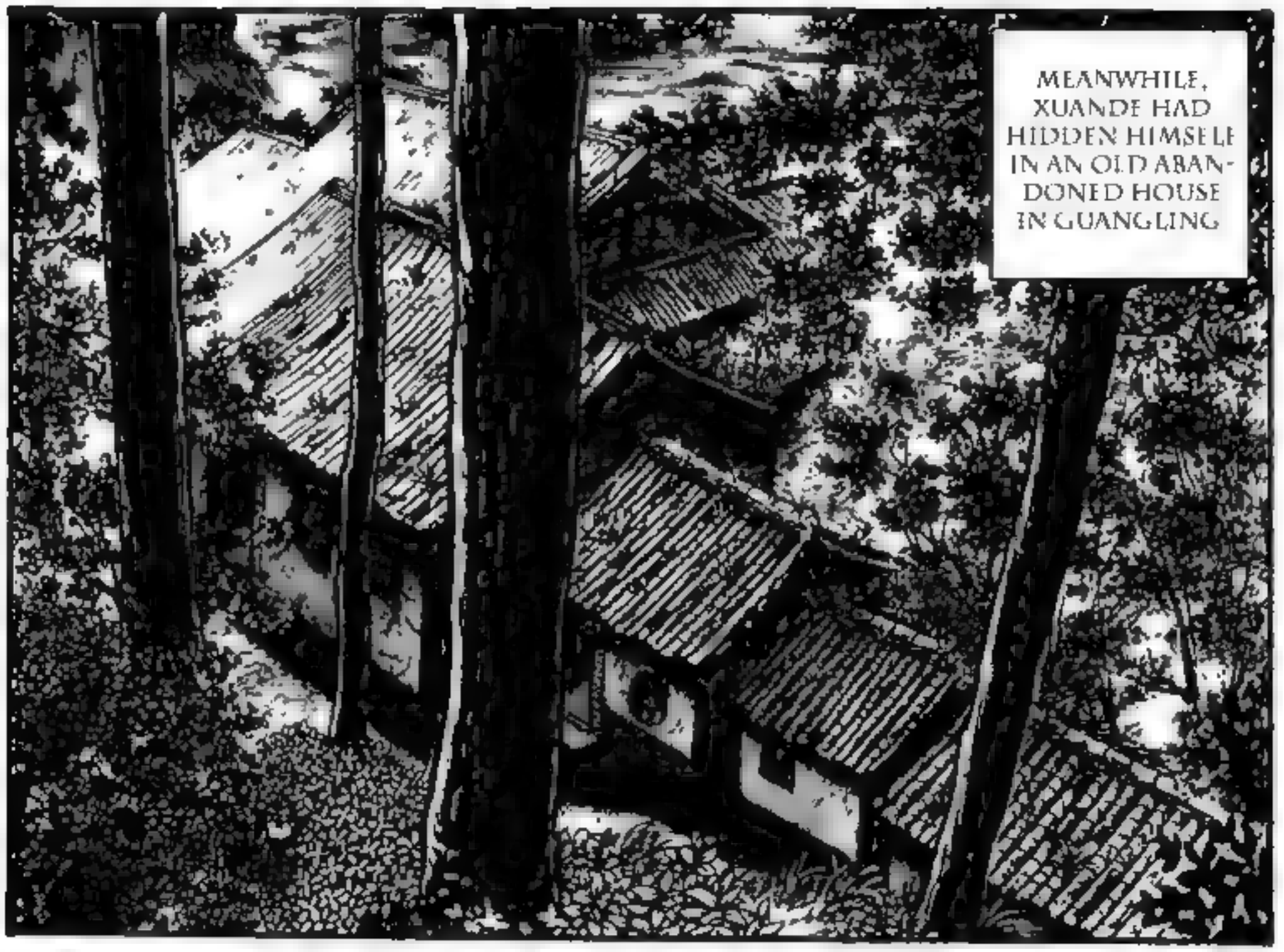
I AM SURE THAT SIR WILL REMEMBER HOW THE NUMBER OF DESERTERS ONLY INCREASED WITH EACH NIGHT, AND OF HOW WE SPENT EACH NIGHT IN UNEASINESS FOR NOT KNOWING JUST WHEN OUR SUBORDINATES MIGHT BETRAY AND KILL US.

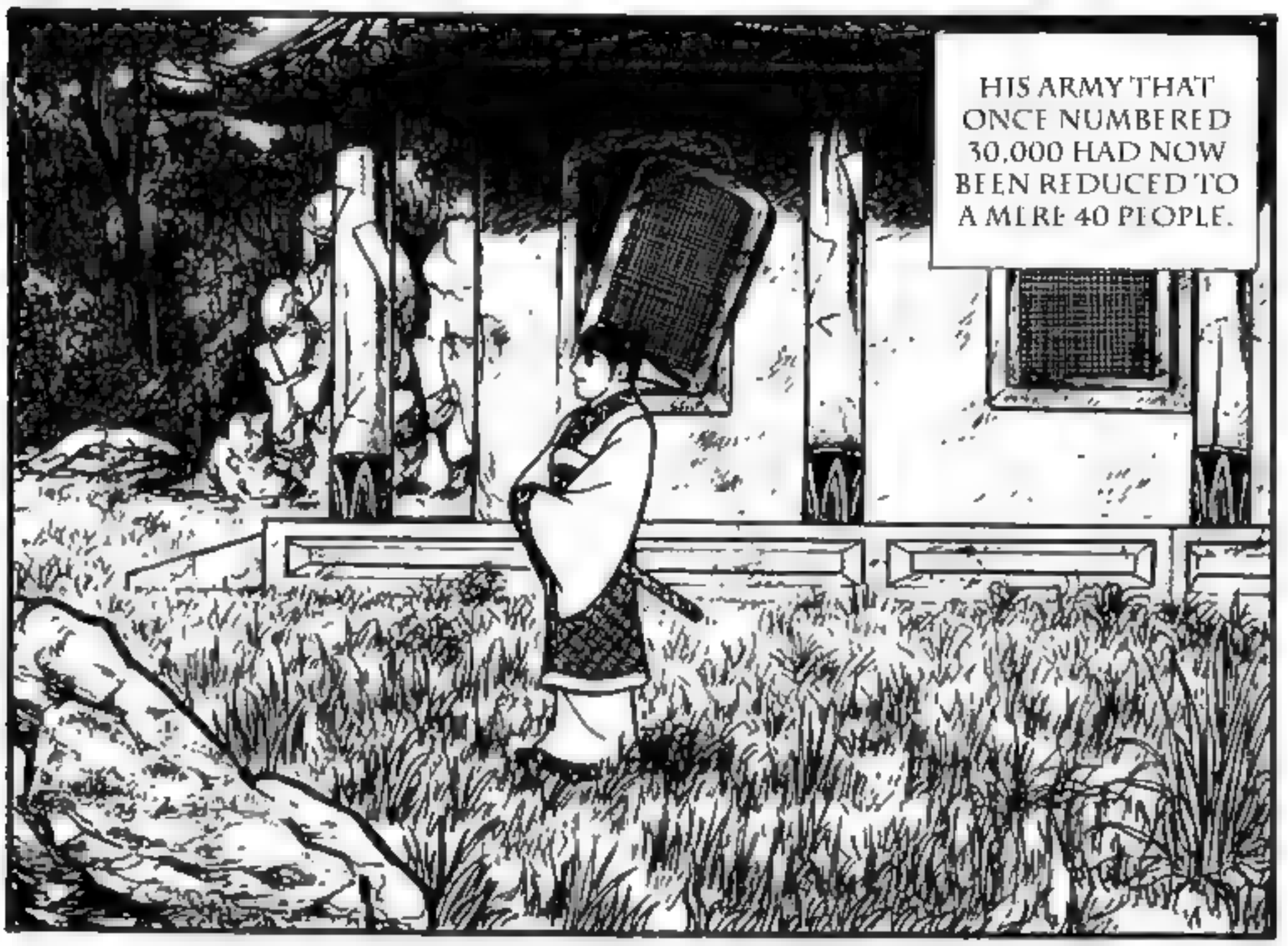
THEN HE'LL REALLY COME BACK HERE?

I SHALL SHOW THAT YUAN SHU THAT LU BU IS NO MERE UNDERLING OF HIS...!

RIGHT AWAY, MY LORD.

ALRIGHT, SEND HIM A MESSAGE AT ONCE.


MEANWHILE, XUANDE HAD HIDDEN HIMSELF IN AN OLD ABANDONED HOUSE IN GUANGLING


HIS ARMY THAT ONCE NUMBERED 30,000 HAD NOW BEEN REDUCED TO A MERE 40 PEOPLE.

ALRIGHT, LET ME SEE HIM THEN.

YES, MY LORD.

WHAT!?

MY LORD, A MESSENGER FROM LU BU HAS COME.

I HAVE COME TO DELIVER THIS LETTER TO SIR.

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS WITH ME?

MY LORD ALSO WISHES TO INFORM SIR THAT SIR'S MOTHER AND WIFE ARE ALL DOING WELL.

HMM...

YES. HE IS HERE RIGHT NOW.
BROTHER, IS IT TRUE THAT A MESSENGER FROM LU BU HAS COME?

ZHANG FEI, STOP!

IS THAT SO? WELL THEN, ALLOW ME TO SEND BACK A PROPER REPLY ..!

SO WHAT DOES THE LETTER FROM LU BU SAY?

BUT...

LIKE WE COULD BUY SUCH NONSENSE!

HE SAYS THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF STEALING AWAY XUZHOU FROM ME. HE ONLY WISHED TO CHASE OUT CORRUPT OFFICIALS THAT WERE MAKING THE PEOPLE SUFFER. AND NOW THAT HE HAS DONE THAT, IT WOULD BE HIS PLEASURE TO WELCOME ME BACK TO XUZHOU.

BUT STAYING HERE ANY LONGER WOULD BE UNSAFE.

NO, BUT I STILL WISH TO SEE MY MOTHER AND WIFE AFTER SO LONG.

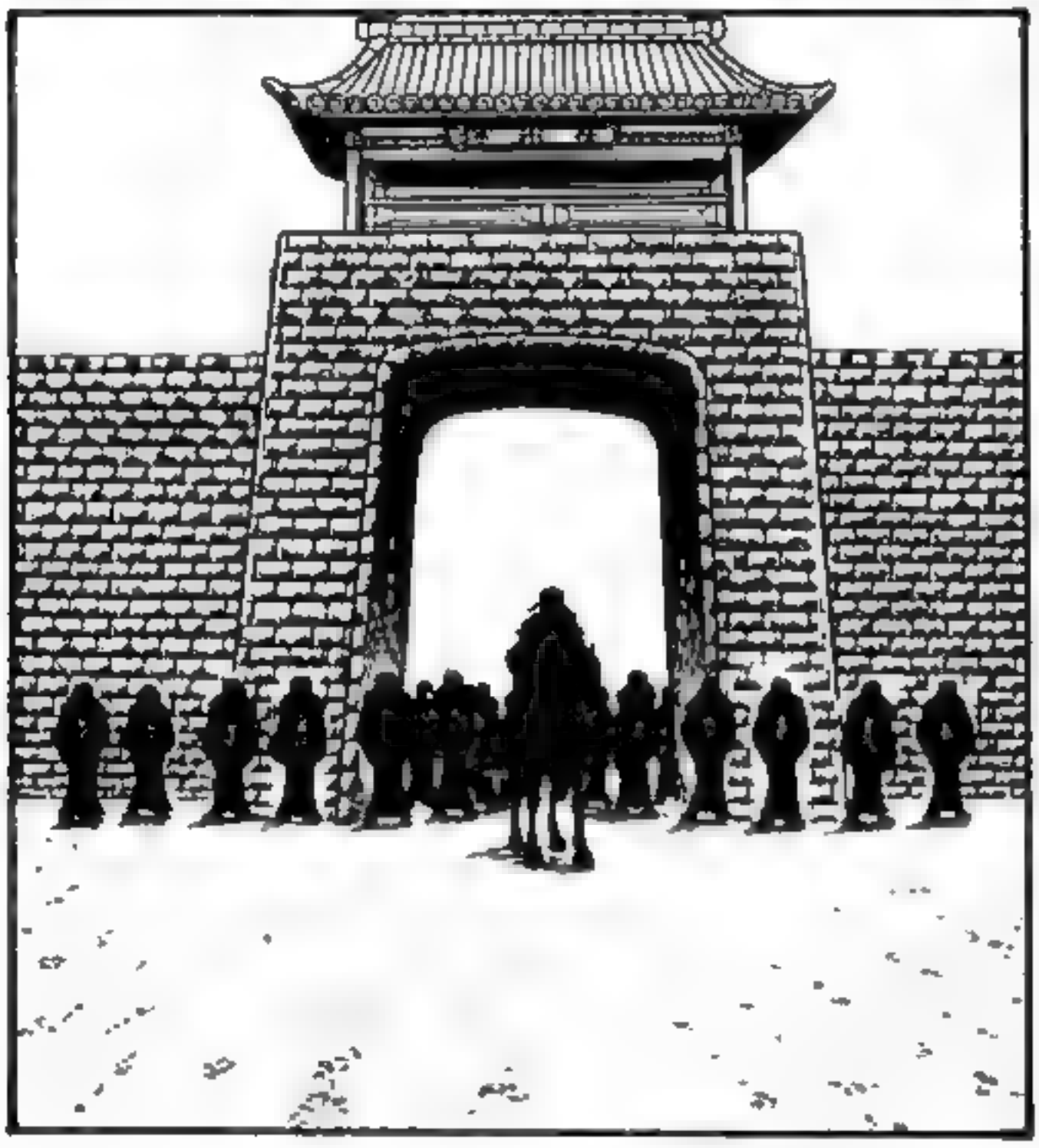
BUT DOES BROTHER THINK LU BU'S WORDS CAN REALLY BE TRUSTED?

.....
BUT BROTHER! AREN'T YOU THE SLIGHTEST BIT OFFENDED!?

IT IS TO BIDE TIME UNTIL IT CAN SOAR INTO THE HEAVENS...

ZHANG FEI, WHY WOULD A DRAGON HIDE ITSELF BENEATH A MERE POND?

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A MAN MUST ENDURE THE SHAME AND HIS RAGE.



YES...

BROTHER, WE MUST NOT LOWER OUR GUARD DOWN EVEN FOR A SECOND.

XUANDE!

DEAR!

ガッ ガッ ガッ

MOTHER, WIFE, HAVE YOU BEEN WELL?

AHH!

GOOD DAY. IT MAKES ME HAPPY TO SEE THAT SIR HAS COME BACK.

AH, GOOD DAY, LU BU.

YOU ARE TOO KIND.

I WAS OVERJOYED TO HEAR THAT YOU ACCEPTED MY INVITATION AND SO I'VE COME ALL THE WAY OUT TO GREET YOU!

NO, NO, THAT IS NOT NECCESSARY.

AS I HAVE SAID IN MY LETTER, I WILL GLADLY RETURN BACK XUZHOU TO YOU, XUANDE.

OH? SO YOU WISH FOR ME TO CONTINUE TO RULE OVER XUZHOU?

I AM STILL MUCH TOO YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED FOR THAT POSITION. I BELIEVE THE GENERAL WOULD BE A MORE APPROPRIATE CANDIDATE TO BE XUZHOU'S GOVERNOR.

WELL, IF YOU INSIST, THEN I HAVE NO CHOICE...

YES, OF COURSE.

WHY, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?

NOW THEN, LET US RETURN TO THE CASTLE AND ENJOY OURSELVES A GRAND FEAST!

HAHAHA! YOU ARE QUITE WISE FOR YOUR AGE!

CALM YOURSELF, ZHANG FEI OUR BROTHER IS ENDURING THIS AS WELL FOR THE SAKE OF HIS OWN PLANS.

... NGHH!

LIU BEI AND LU BU, THE TWO MEN THAT CAO CAO FEARED

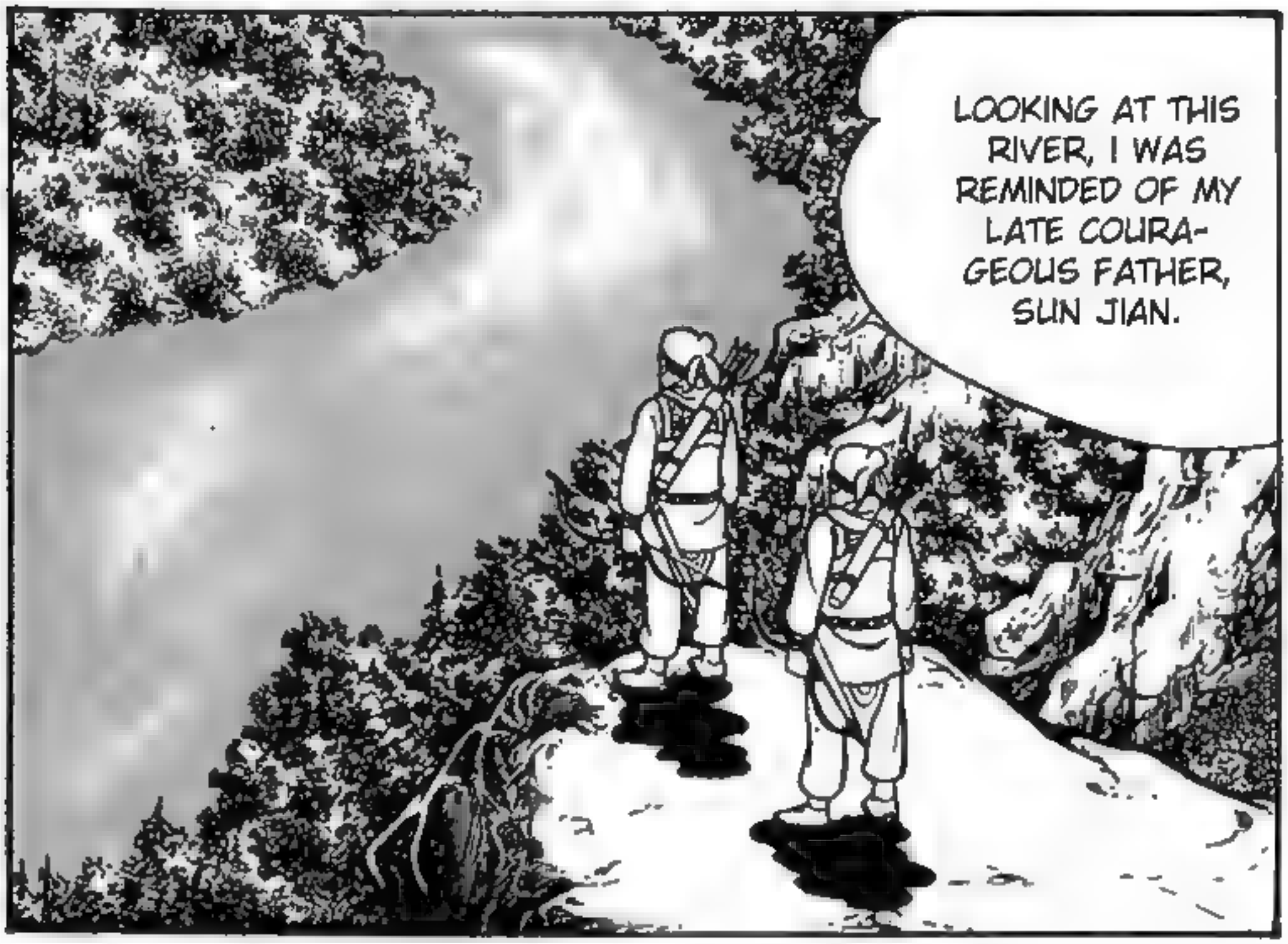
DESPITE CAO CAO'S ATTEMPTS TO TURN THEM AGAINST EACH OTHER BY UTILISING VARIOUS RUSES, THE TWO HAD SOMEHOW MANAGED TO MAINTAIN THEIR FRIENDLY RELATIONS

THE LITTLE CONQUEROR, SUN CE

HAS SIR BECOME HOMESICK...?

WHAT IS YOUNG MASTER LOOKING SO FORLON ABOUT?

I DO NOT SHED THESE TEARS OF MINE FOR SUCH AN EFFEMINATE REASON.


LOOKING AT THIS RIVER, I WAS REMINDED OF MY LATE COURA-GEOUS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

LEADING A FLEET LARGE ENOUGH TO MAKE THE YANGTZE RIVER SEEM SMALL,

HOW MAGNIFICENT MY FATHER APPEARED BEFORE MY EYES...!!!

IF HE JUST DIDN'T FALL INTO THAT TRAP...

BUT SINCE MY FATHER'S PASSING, OUR FAMILY HAS FALLEN IN STATUS, AND I MUST RELY ON YUAN SHU FOR PROTECTION...

THEN HE MAY HAVE EVEN CONQUERED THIS ENTIRE KINGDOM BY NOW...

AND SO I WAS CRYING BECAUSE OF HOW WORTH-LESS AND PATHETIC I AM COMPARED TO MY FATHER.

EVEN THOUGH I SHOULD BE SPENDING EVERY WAKING HOUR TO RESTORE THE PROUD NAME OF THE SUN FAMILY, HERE I AM... A MERE DOG OF YUAN SHU!

BUT I HAVE NO ARMY NOR THE FUNDS TO EQUIP AND FEED THEM ...

IF YOUNG MASTER FEELS THAT WAY, THEN WHY NOT TRY MAKING A STAND?

YOUR UNCLE WU JING WHO WAS FORMERLY THE GOVERNOR OF DANYANG HAS LOST HIS TERRITORY TO LIU YAO, THE GOVERNOR OF YANGZHOU. YOUNG MASTER COULD ASK YUAN SHU FOR SOME TROOPS UNDER THE REASON THAT YOU WISH TO HELP YOUR UNCLE RETRIEVE HIS LOST LANDS.

THEN WHY NOT BORROW FROM YUAN SHU ...?

BUT WOULD HE REALLY AGREE TO LEND ME SOME TROOPS...?

YUAN SHU IS NOT THE MOST GENEROUS MAN. HE ONLY ALLOWED ME TO STAY HERE WITH HIM BECAUSE HE SHOULDERS A LITTLE BIT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR URGING MY FATHER TO ATTACK JINGZHOU. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE IS ENVIOUS OF THE IMPERIAL SEAL THAT MY FAMILY HAS IN POSSESSION...

I STILL HAD *THAT* LEFT...!

AHHH! THAT'S RIGHT!

WHAT!?

I SHALL GIVE YUAN SHU THE IMPERIAL SEAL.

THE IMPERIAL SEAL IS OF NO USE TO ME RIGHT NOW!

B-BUT THE IMPERIAL SEAL...!? IT IS SAID THAT WHOEVER HOLDS THE SEAL SHALL RULE THE WORLD. TO HAND THAT OVER SO EASILY...

WHAT I NEED NOW IS A POWERFUL ARMY!

AND JUST WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH THEM?

I WISH TO HELP MY UNCLE, WU JIN, WHO HAS BEEN CHASED OUT OF DANYANG BY LIU YAO.

YES, SIR.

WHAT? YOU WISH FOR ME TO LEND YOU SOME TROOPS?

WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE, I DOUBT IF YOU COULD EFFECTIVELY LEAD AN ARMY ON YOUR OWN.

HMM, WELL I CERTAINLY DO UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS BUT YOU ARE STILL YOUNG.

WHA?

IF SIR GRANTS MY REQUEST OF LENDING TROOPS TO ME, THEN I SHALL LEND SIR THE IMPERIAL SEAL IN RETURN.

I SAID I WOULD GLADLY LEND SIR THE IMPERIAL SEAL.

W-WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY!?

WHY DOESN'T SIR TAKE A LOOK HIMSELF?

S-SO THAT RUMOUR OF YOUR LATE FATHER FINDING THE SEAL FROM A WELL IS TRUE!?

AHH...!

L-LET ME SEE.

T-THIS IS THE IMPERIAL SEAL! THE SEAL SAID TO MAKE WHOEVER HOLDING IT THE EMPEROR!

既受命於天
壽永昌

W-WHY OF COURSE I'LL AGREE TO YOUR REQUEST!

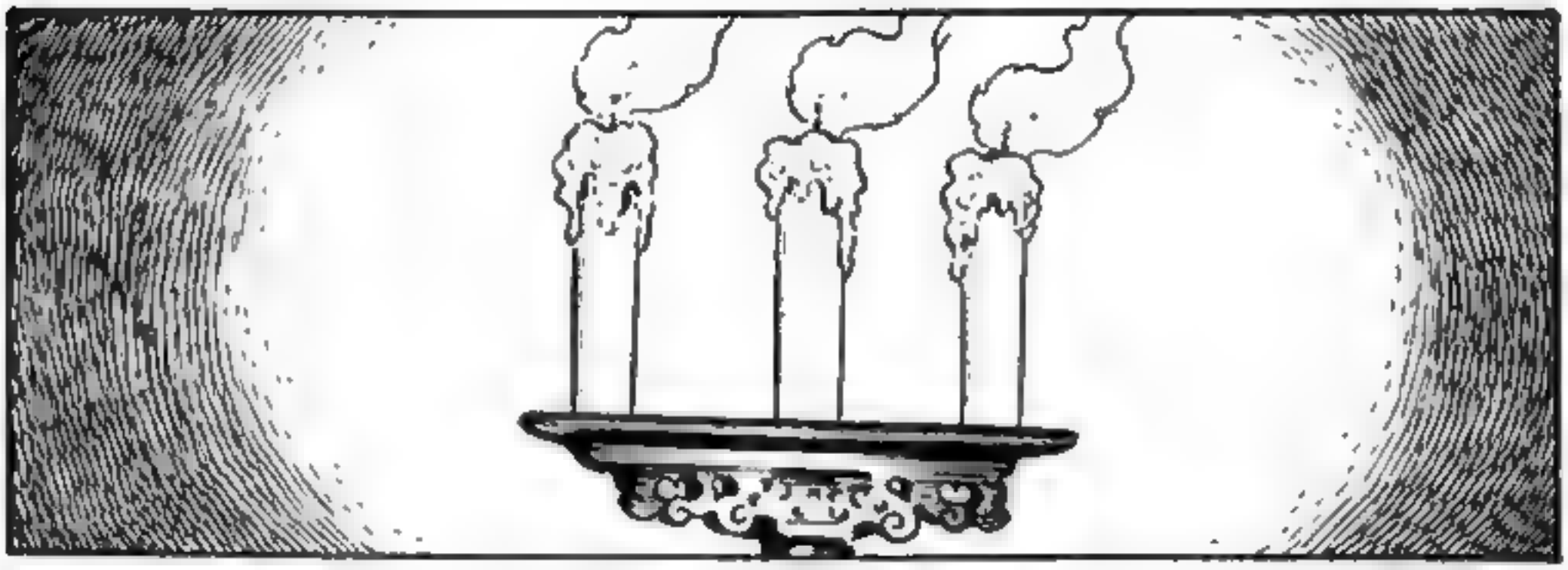
IF SIR ENTRSUTS ME WITH TROOPS, THEN OF COURSE.

A-AND YOU'LL REALLY ENTRUST THIS TO ME!?

YES, SIR.

GIVE SUN CE 3000 SOLDIERS AND 500 HORSES!

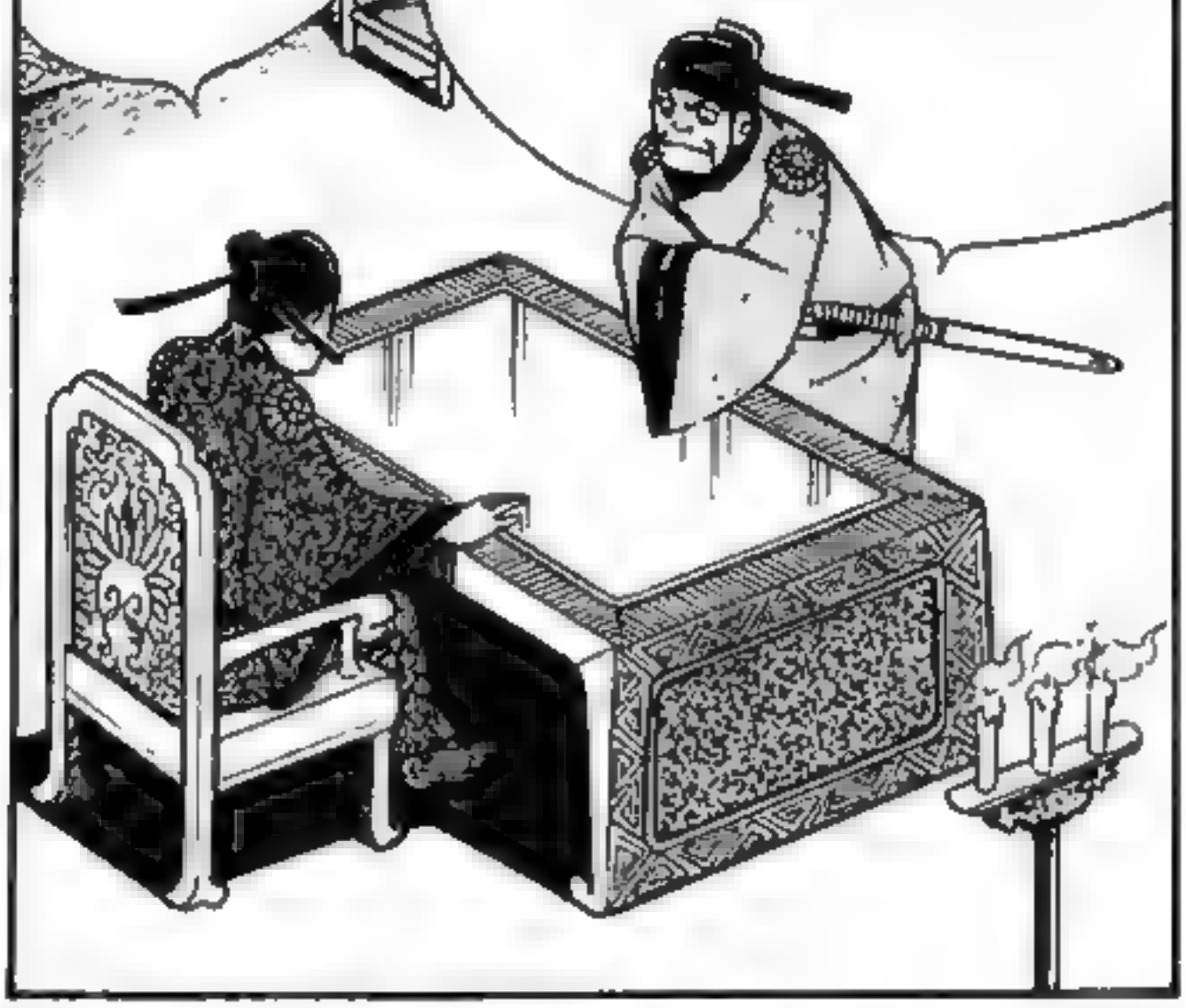
THANK YOU, SIR.



THEY ARE TWO TALENTED MEN EQUAL TO NONE IN ALL OF JIANGDONG WHO ARE QUIETLY LIVING OUT IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE. ONE IS CALLED ZHANG ZHAO, AND IS SAID TO BE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN A WIDE VARIETY OF SUBJECTS. THE OTHER IS CALLED ZHANG HONG, AND HE IS SAID TO BE QUICK-WITTED AND EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT. THESE TWO ARE ALSO KNOWN AS THE "TWO ZHANGS."

THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANDONG?

NOW THAT YOUNG MASTER HAS OBTAINED HIS ARMY, THE NEXT STEP IS TO OBTAIN THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANGDONG.



THEY CARE NOT FOR POWER NOR MATERIAL WEALTH, BUT ARE SAID TO PLACE HIGH VALUE IN COMPASSION AND GENEROSITY. I AM SURE THAT THEY WILL AGREE TO HELP IF SIR VISITS PERSONALLY.

BUT WOULD SUCH TALENTED INDIVIDUALS REALLY AGREE TO BE MY ALLIES?

THAT WOULD BE A WISE DECISION, SIR.

I SEE. THEN I SHALL VISIT THEM MYSELF TOMORROW.

BUT EVEN SO...

HAHAHA! I AM NOT AS TALENTED AS SIR THINKS! AS YOU CAN SEE, I AM A MERE BOOKWORM QUIETLY LIVING OUT HIS DAYS IN THESE PARTS. I'M AFRAID I DO NOT HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT IN THESE CHAOTIC TIMES.

I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU LEFT NOW.

I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE FOR TODAY BUT I SHALL VISIT HERE EVERYDAY UNTIL SIR COMPLIES.

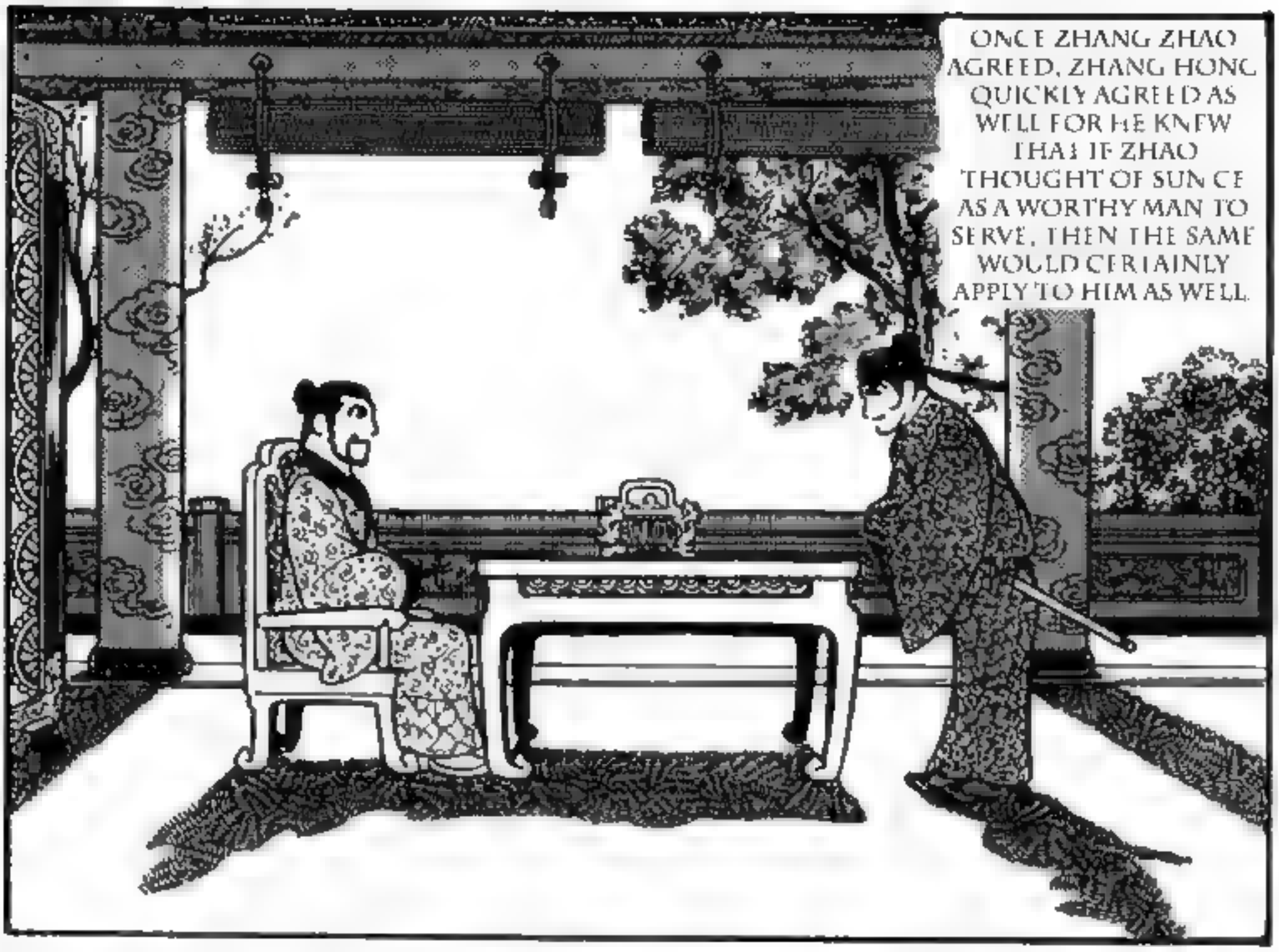
I'M AFRAID MY HEART IS SET NO MATTER WHAT SIR SAYS.
I AM STILL MUCH TOO INEXPERIENCED AND IN NEED OF GUIDANCE.

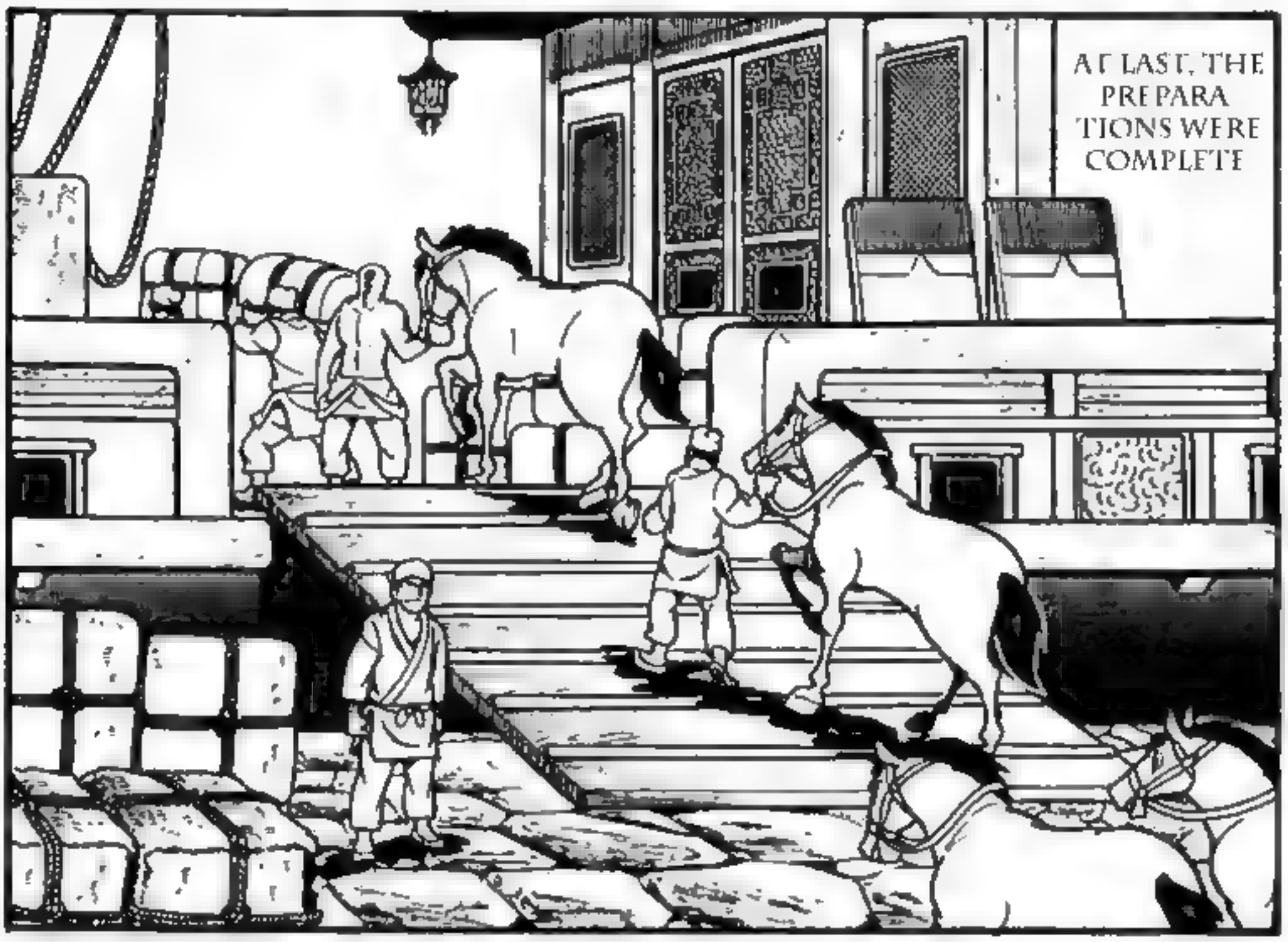
AND SINCE THAT DAY, SUN CE VISITED ZHANG ZHAO NO MATTER RAIN OR SHINE

DOES SIR SPEAK IN EARNEST?

I SEE NOW THAT I STAND NO CHANCE AGAINST SIR'S PERSISTENCE. I DO NOT KNOW IF I CAN REALLY BE OF ANY USE BUT LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR THE TIME BEING.

I THANK SIR GREATLY FOR AGREEING TO HELP THIS INEXPERIENCED GREENHORN OUT.


ONCE ZHANG ZHAO AGREED, ZHANG HONG QUICKLY AGREED AS WELL FOR HE KNEW THAT IF ZHAO THOUGHT OF SUN CE AS A WORTHY MAN TO SERVE, THEN THE SAME WOULD CERTAINLY APPLY TO HIM AS WELL.


AT LAST, THE PREPARA TIONS WERE COMPLETE

SUN JIAN'S FIRST TARGET WAS LIU YAO, YANGZHOU'S GOVERNOR WHO CHASED HIS UNCLE OUT FROM HIS LANDS.

SUN CE MAY HAVE SEEMED SMALL COMPARED TO HIS FATHER, WHO LED A FLEET OF 500 SHIPS, BUT IN HIS DISPLAY OF COURAGE AND AUDACITY, HE WAS NOW STANDING ON EQUAL GROUNDS

MEANWHILE, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE YANGTZE RIVER WAS LIU YAO. HE WAS FROM AN AFFLUENT ARISTOCRATIC FAMILY AND THUS HAD MANY TALENTED SUBORDINATES

THAT IS THE MOST LIKELY REASON, MY LORD.

HMM, THAT'S RIGHT. HE MUST BE TRYING TO RECLAIM THESE LANDS AFTER I TOOK THEM FROM HIS UNCLE, WU JIN.

WHAT!? SUN JIAN'S SON, SUN CE, HAS COME TO ATTACK YANGZHOU!?

I BELIEVE SUN CE ONLY HAS A FEW SHIPS AND 3000 SOLDIERS.

HOW MANY DO THE ENEMIES NUMBER?

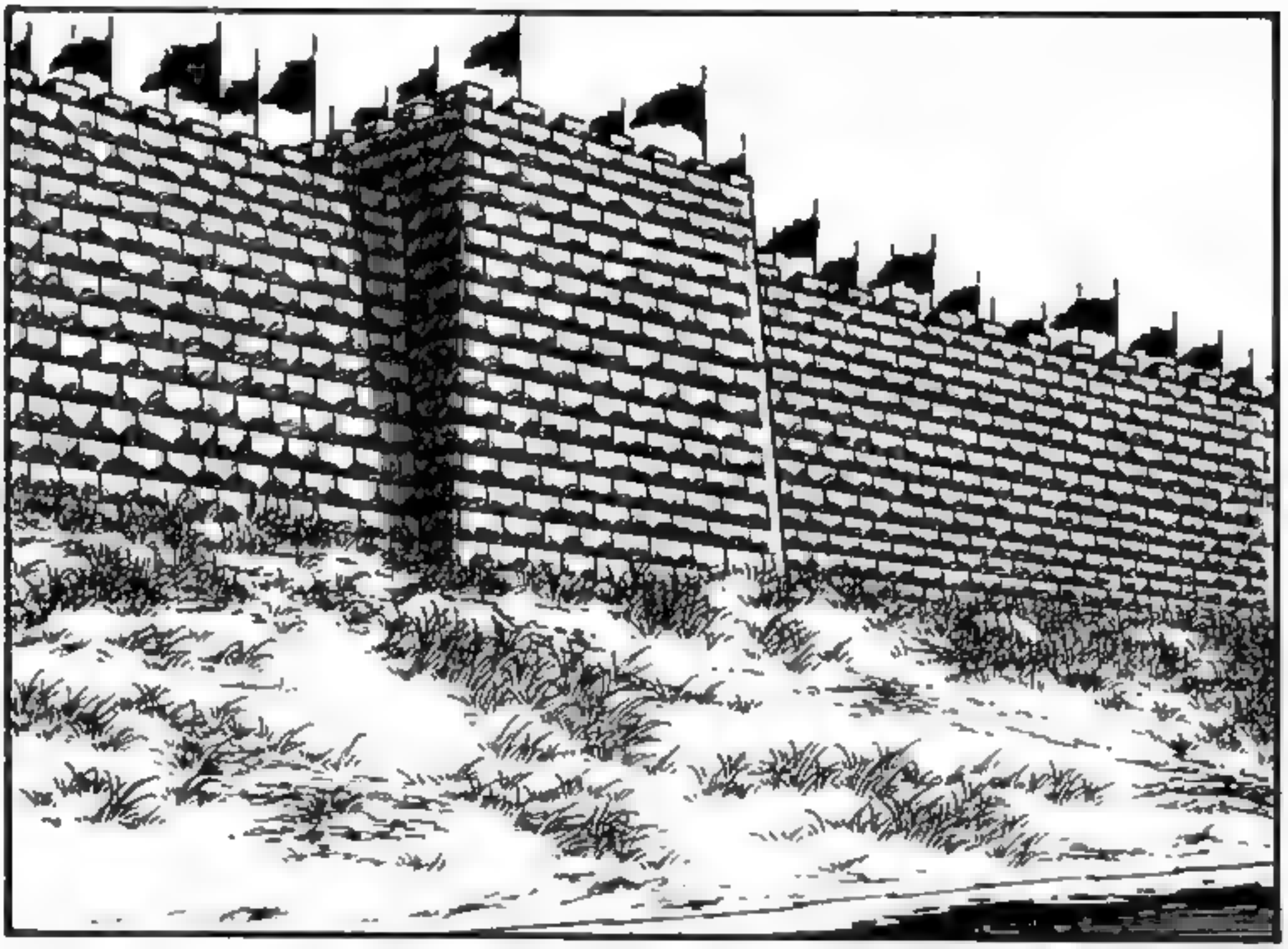
YES, MY LORD. I SHALL SHOW THAT YOUNGSTER THE REALITY OF THIS WORLD.

GOOD. GENERAL ZHANG YING, I WANT YOU TO GO TO NIUZHU AND CRUSH HIS PITIFUL FORCES WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

HAHA, JUST WHAT CAN THAT LITTLE BOY DO!?

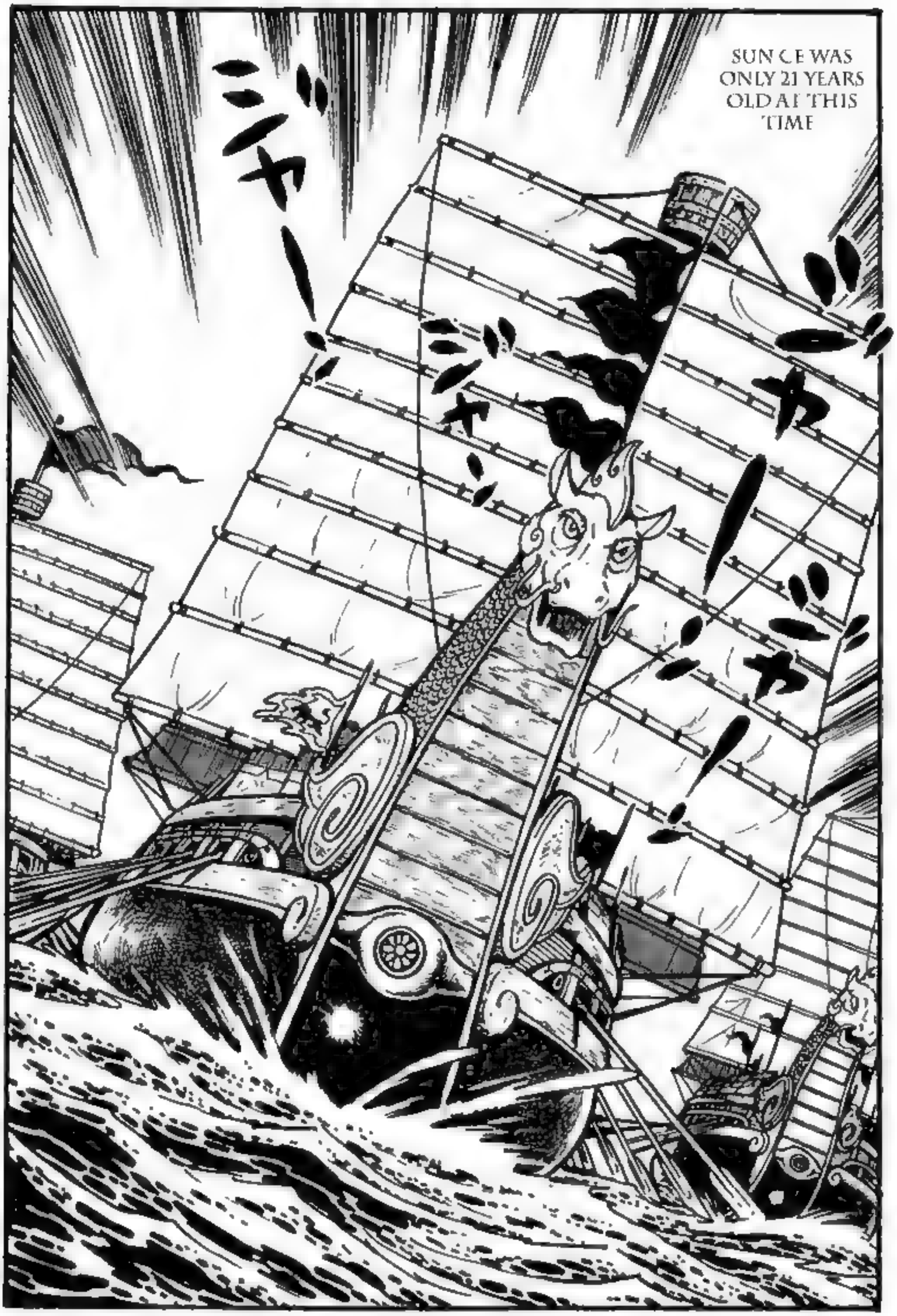
AH, IS THAT SO?

SIR, THAT IS NIUZHU IN FRONT OF US.



YES...
LET US TAKE NIUZHU IN ONE FELL SWOOP AND LET THE HEAVENS KNOW THE PROUD NAME OF SUN!

RING THE GONG FOR THE SIGNAL TO ATTACK!

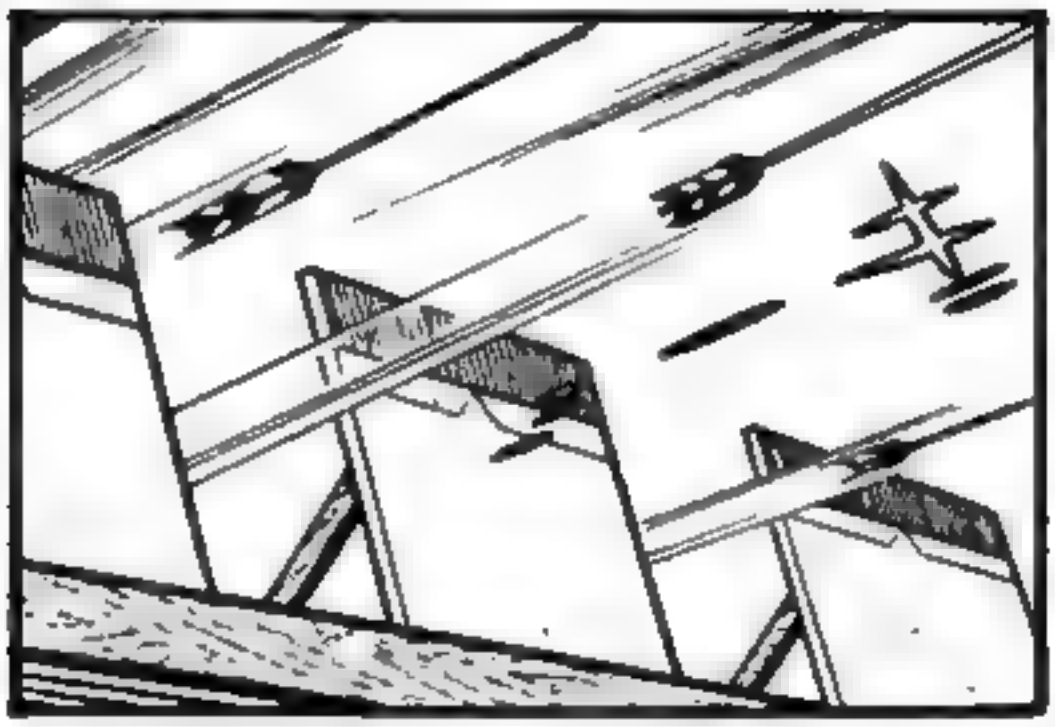

SUN CE WAS ONLY 21 YEARS OLD AT THIS TIME

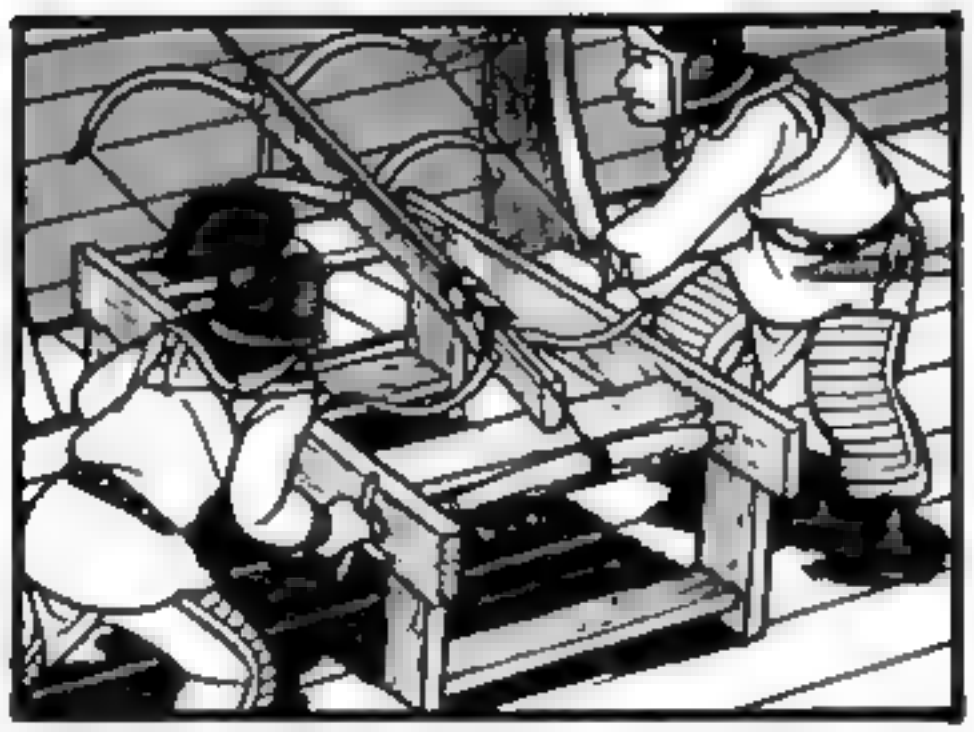
HA! THAT ARROGANT LITTLE YOUNGSTER ...!

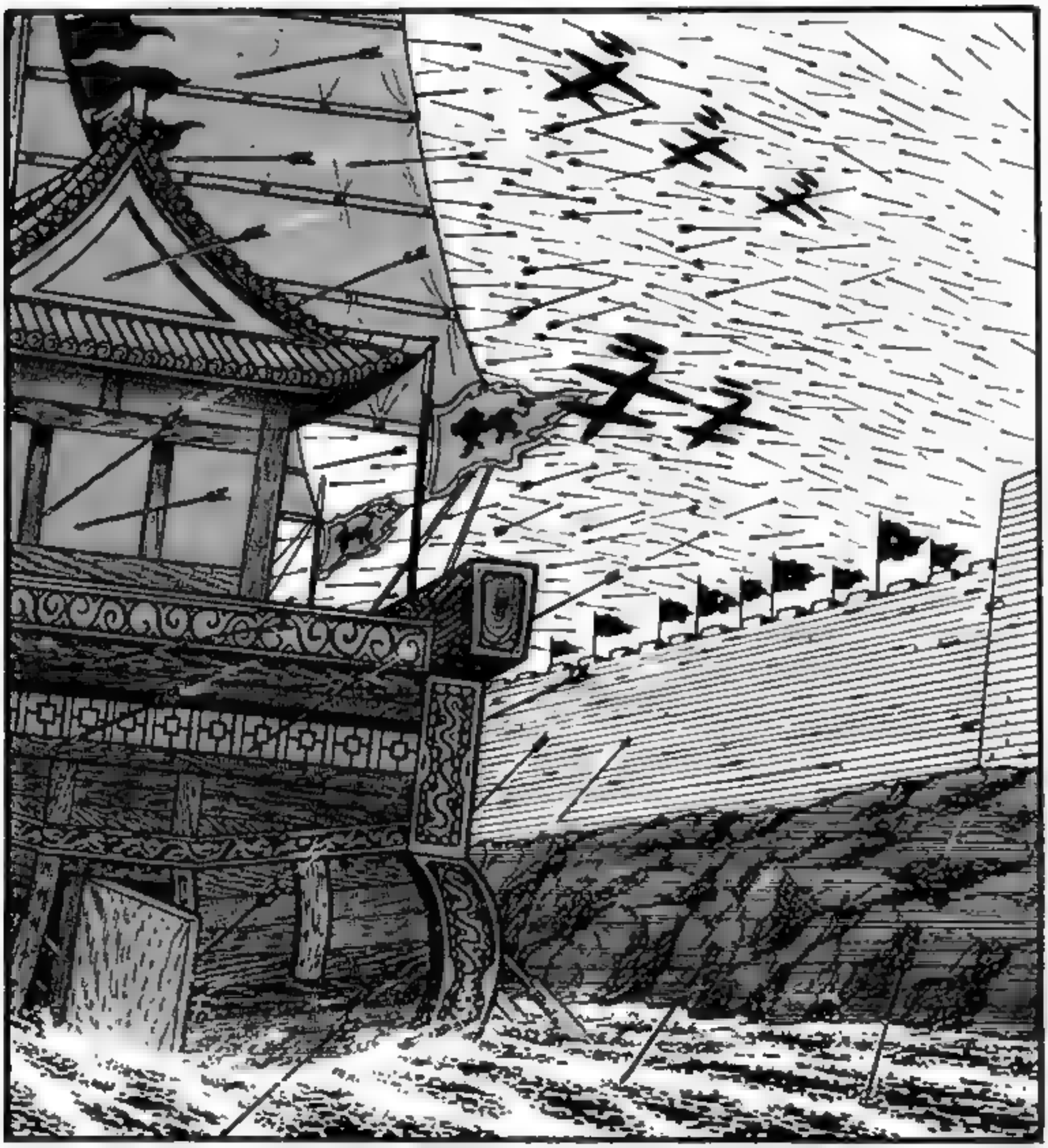
COMMANDER, SUN CE'S FORCES HAVE BEGUN TO ATTACK.

ARCHERS!

RETURN FIRE!







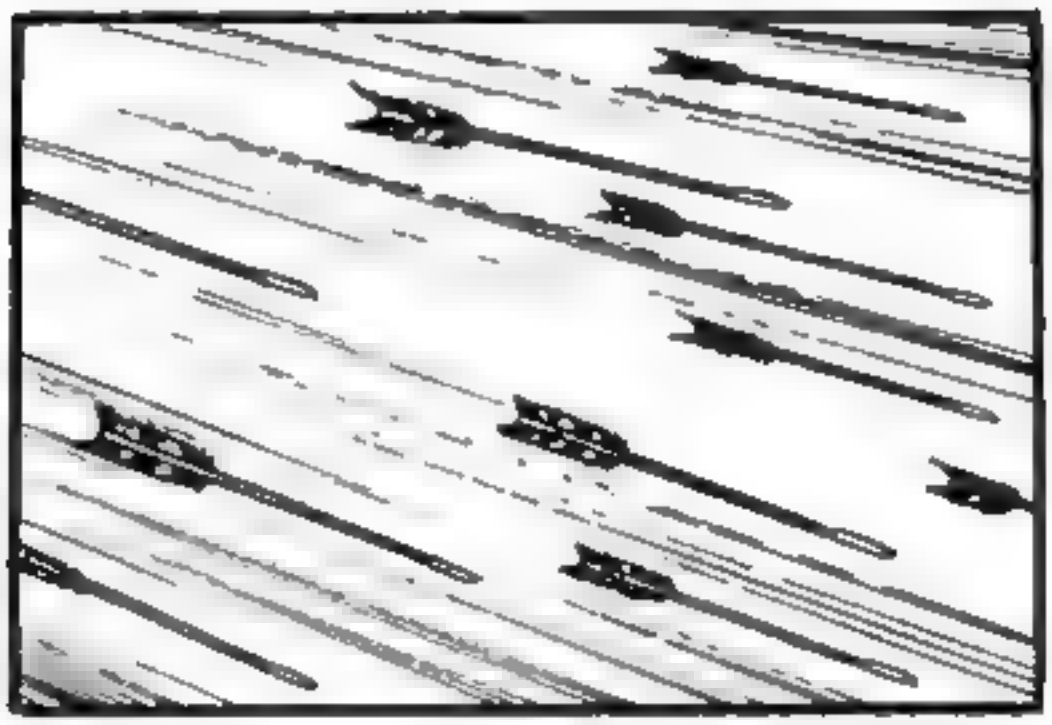
IF THE COMMANDER IS AFRAID TO CHARGE, THEN HOW CAN HE EXPECT HIS MEN TO CHARGE AS WELL?

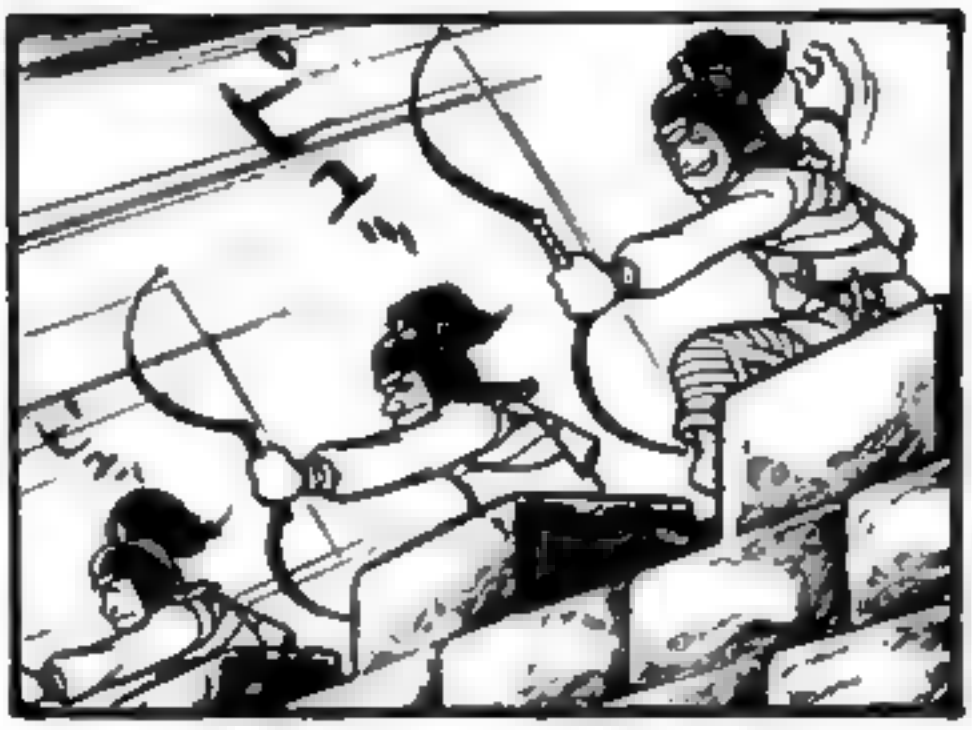
S-SIR! YOU MUSTN'T RUSH OUT IN FRONT!

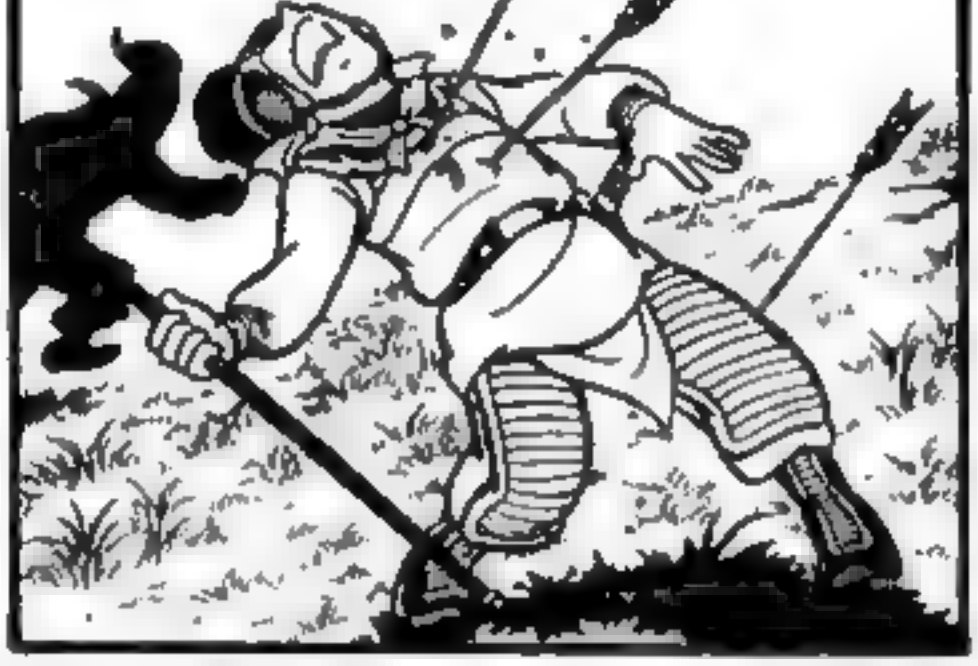
CHARGE! FOLLOW AFTER ME, MY MEN!

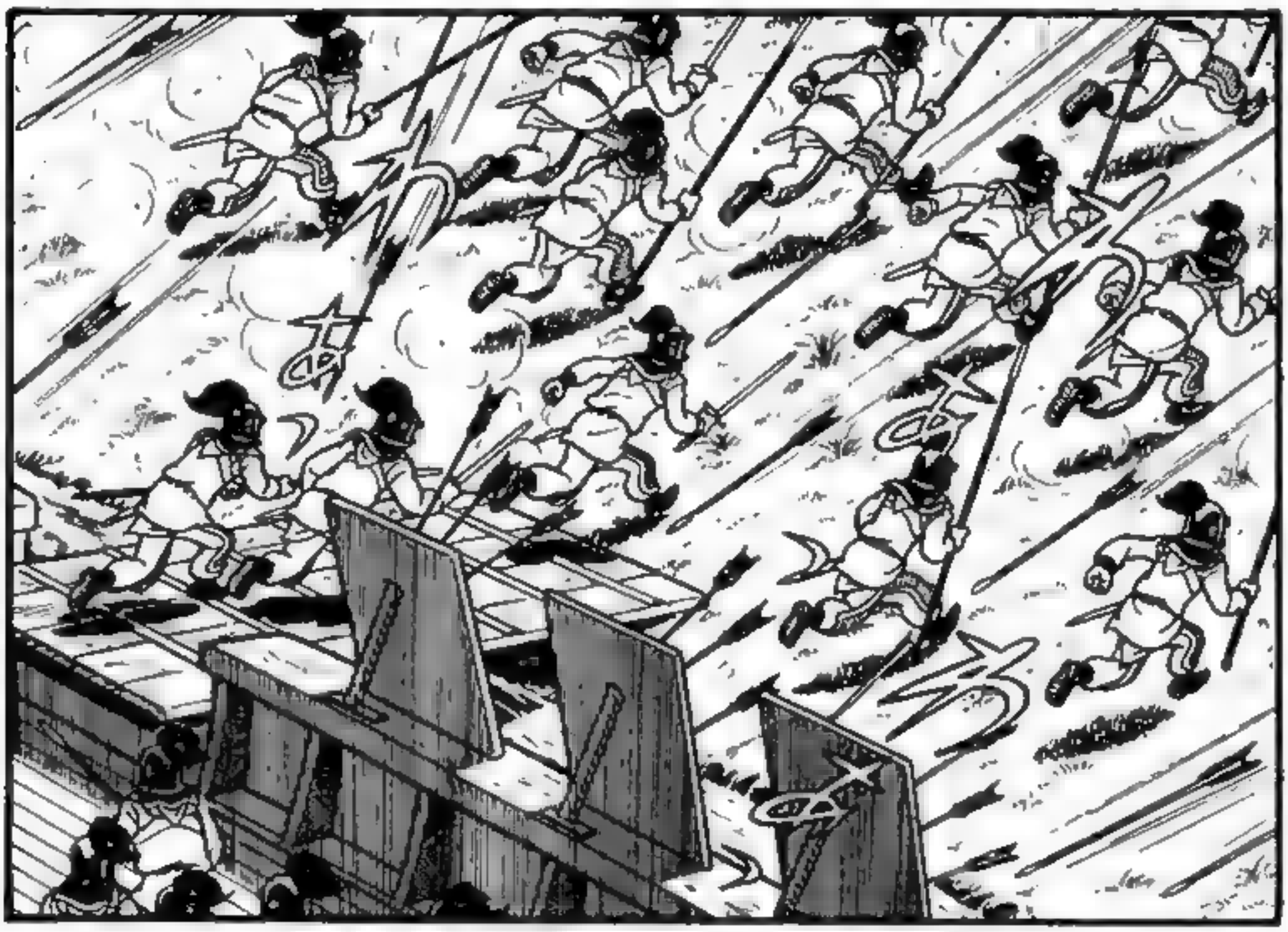
COME ON MEN! LET US FOLLOW OUR COM-MANDER!

AHHH!









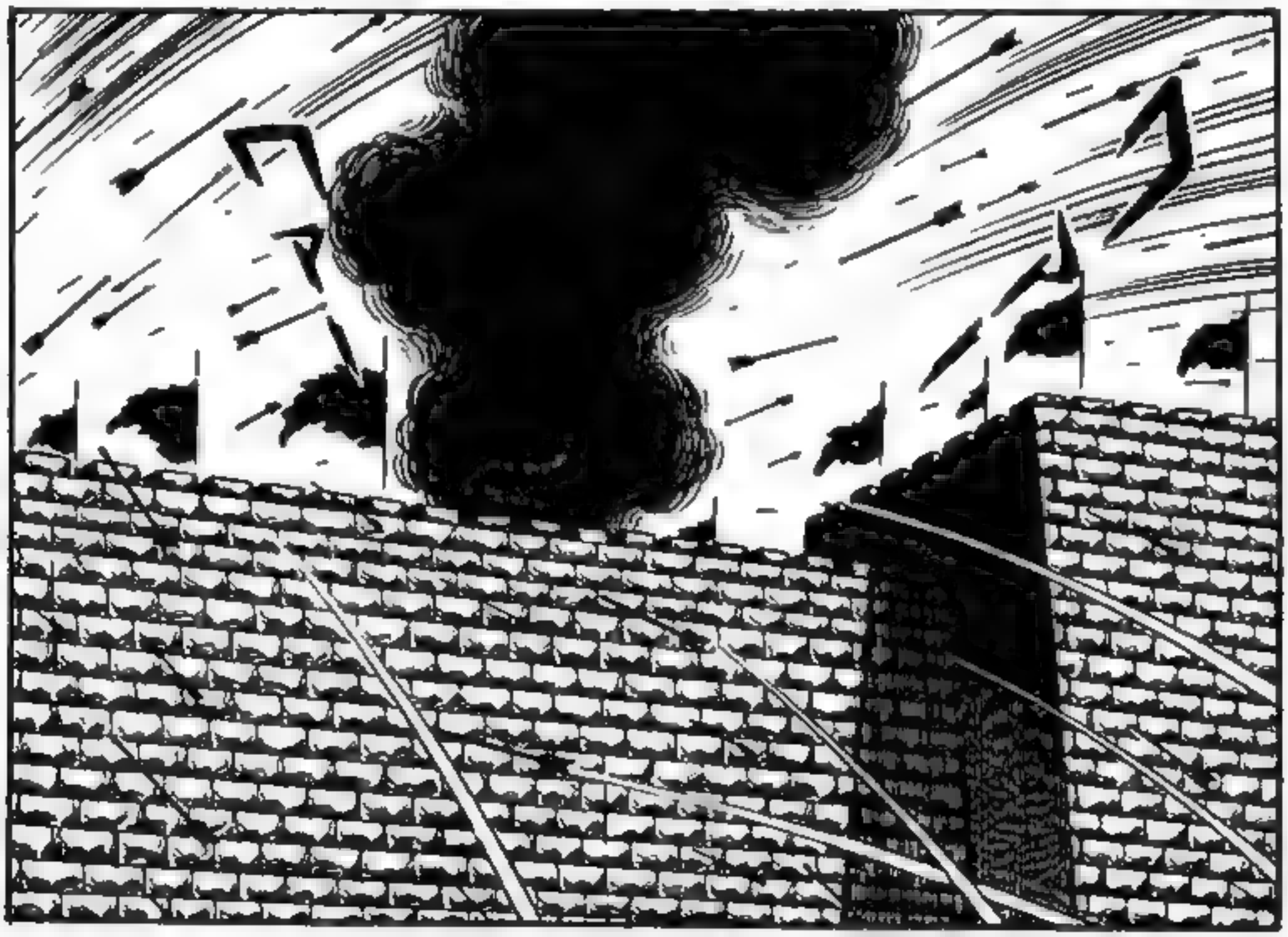
DON'T LET A SINGLE ENEMY CROSS THESE WALLS!

HAHAHA! KILL EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM!

HMM?

HMM?

YES...
THE FORTRESS'S DEFENSES ARE QUITE STRONG, SIR. AT THIS RATE, OUR CASUALTIES WILL ONLY INCREASE.



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W-WHAT IS THAT SMOKE!?

AND THERE!

SIR, OVER THERE AS WELL!

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HOW MANY REBELS ARE THERE?

IT IS HARD TO SAY THERE MAY BE AS FEW AS 500 OR AS MANY AS A 1000, SIR.

WHAT!?
COMMANDER! THERE HAS BEEN A REBELLION!

NNGGGHHHH! JUST WHO DARES TO BETRAY ME!?

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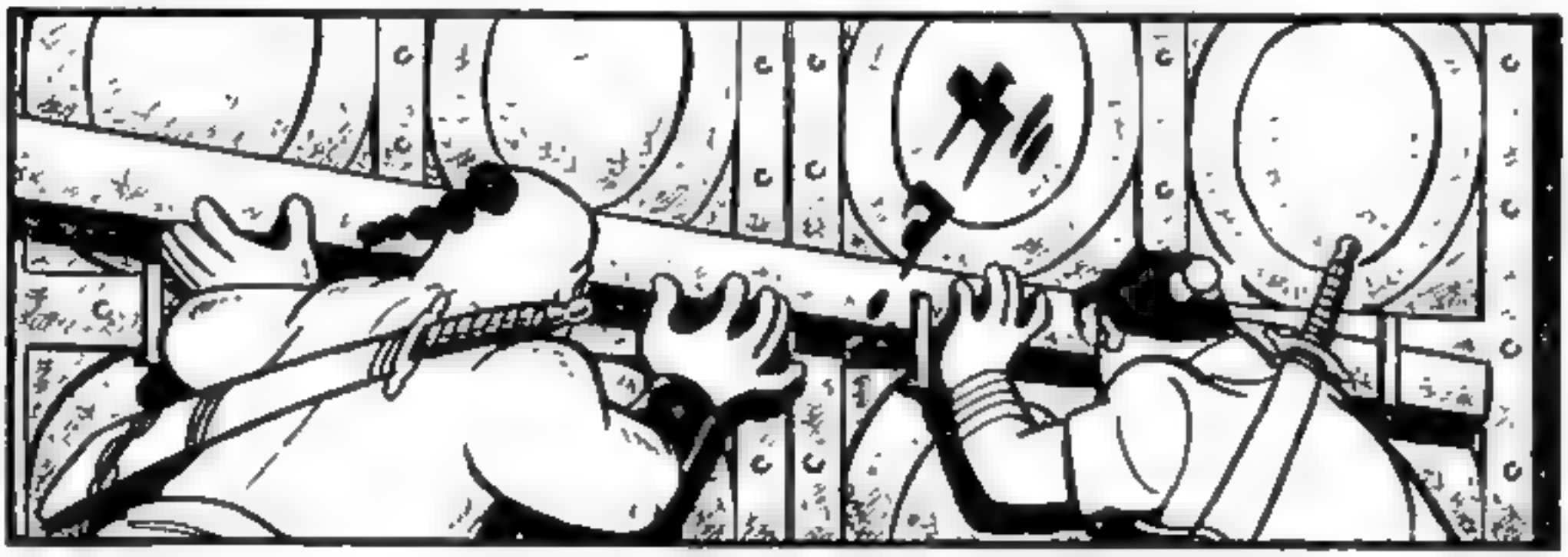
SIR, THIS PLACE IS NO LONGER SAFE! THIS WAY, SIR!

YES.

AGHHH!

OPEN THE GATES TO LET SUN CE'S FORCES IN!



ALRIGHT MEN, NOW'S OUR CHANCE! RUSH IN TO THE FORTRESS!

HMM...
THE GATES SEEMED TO HAVE OPENED FOR SOME REASON, SIR.

R-RUN FOR IT!

AGHHH!

YES, WE HAVE SCORED A GREAT VICTORY.

THE ENEMIES SEEM TO HAVE ALREADY FLED IN PANIC, SIR.

BUT JUST WHO WAS IT THAT HELPED OUR SIDE...?

HMM?

AH!

WE SHALL GO DOWN TO WHERE YOU ARE IN JUST A MOMENT!

CEASE FIRE! WE ARE ON YOUR SIDE!

.....

WE ARE HONOURED TO MAKE SIR'S ACQUAINTANCE.

WE ARE BANDITS THAT ROAM AROUND THESE REGIONS.

JUST WHO ARE YOU MEN?

YES. WE HAVE MADE OUR LIVING BY PLUNDERING SHIPS THAT COME AND GO ACROSS THE YANGTZE RIVER.

BANDITS!?

BUT WHY HAVE YOU BANDITS HELPED MY SIDE OUT? AREN'T YOU PEOPLE THE TYPE TO ONLY ATTACK FOR YOUR OWN SELFISH GAINS?

I AM JIANG QIN, COURTESY NAME GONGYI, THE LEADER OF THE BANDITS. AND THIS MAN NEXT TO ME IS MY RIGHT HAND MAN, ZHOU TAI, COURTESY NAME YOUPING.

WE REMEMBER WELL OF JUST HOW FEARFUL THE MIGHTY SUN JIAN WAS AS HE ROAMED THE YANGTZE RIVER.

AH, WELL, THAT IS...

AND SO WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BEST TO JUST GIVE UP OUR LIVES AS BANDITS AND BECOME SIR'S SUBORDINATES.

WE ASSUMED THAT IF SIR WAS TRULY SUN JIAN'S SON, IT WOULD NOT BE LONG BEFORE THESE LANDS ARE UNDER SIR'S CONTROL AND WE WOULD BE ARRESTED AND EXECUTED.

AND THEN WE HEARD OF THE NEWS THAT SUN JIAN'S SON, SUN CE, WAS COMING TO RECLAIM THE REGIONS OF YANGZHOU.

THAT IS WHY WE HID OURSELVES IN NIUZHU THE NIGHT BEFORE YESTERDAY, SO WE COULD ATTACK THE ENEMIES FROM WITHIN AND THROW THEM INTO PANIC WHEN SIR ATTACKED.

BUT WE COULD NOT JUST SHOW UP TO SIR AND DEMAND TO BE MADE SUBORDINATES, SO WE DECIDED TO DEMONSTRATE OUR WORTH FIRST.

AH, SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED!

HAHAHA! I VALUE BOTH YOUR HONESTY AND BRAVERY. I SHALL GLADLY MAKE YOU MEN MY SUBORDI-NATES.

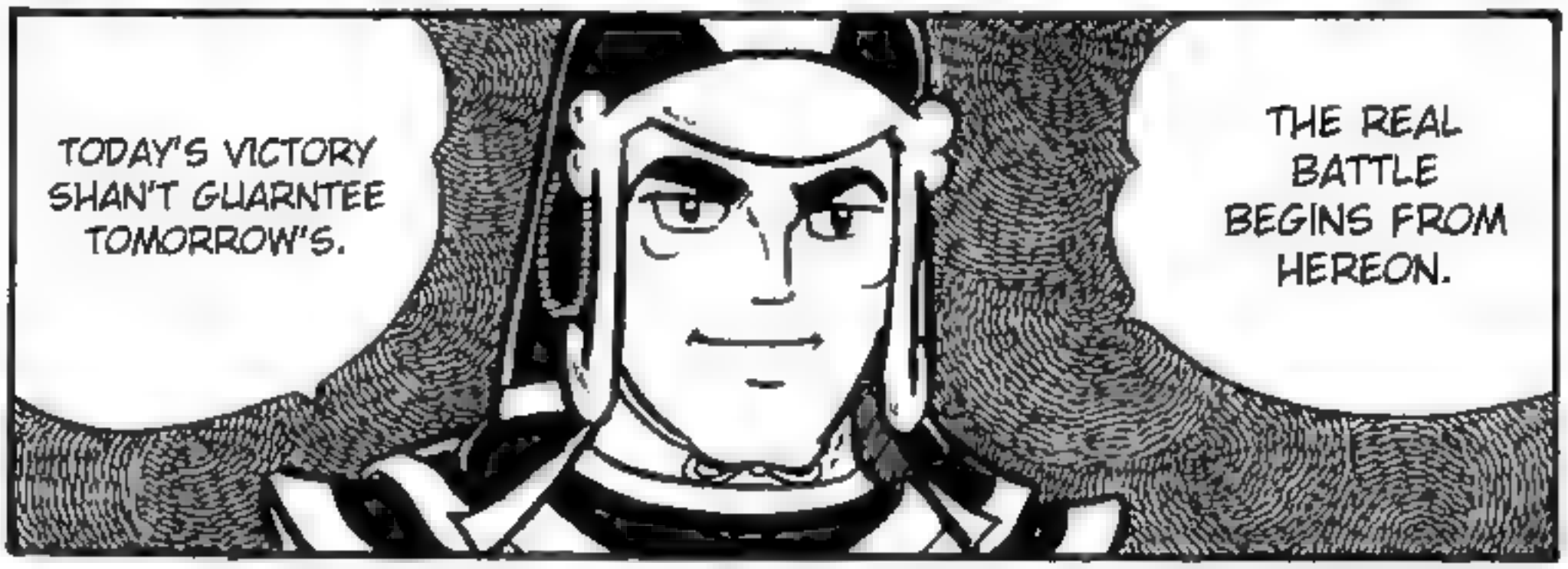
SO I BEG OF SIR TO PLEASE MAKE US INTO SIR'S SUBORDINATES.

HEAR THAT MEN!? FROM TODAY ON, WE ARE SUBORDI-NATES OF THE MIGHTY SUN CE!

THANK YOU, SIR.

BUT IT SEEMS THAT MY FATHER'S VALOUR AND GLORY HAS NOT YET BEEN FORGOTTEN..

THEY ARE QUITE ODD BANDITS.
HAHA...


TODAY'S VICTORY SHAN'T GUARNTEE TOMORROW'S.
THE REAL BATTLE BEGINS FROM HEREON.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO WATCH OVER ME, FATHER.

YES, MY LORD... AND I SHAN'T EXCUSE MYSELF FOR THIS PITIFUL FAILURE.
WHAT!? YOU LOST NIUZHU TO SUN CE!?

YOU MEAN TO SAY YOU COULDN'T EVEN HOLD OUT FOR HALF A DAY!? JUST WHAT WERE YOU AND YOUR MEN DOING!?

DID YOU SIMPLY FLEE AS SOON AS THE THE ENEMY ATTACKED!? YOU DAMN COWARD...! I WAS A FOOL FOR LEAVING SUN CE TO YOU TO DEAL WITH!

AND SO I SHALL EXECUTE YOU MYSELF ...!

I SHALL HAVE YOU BEAR RESPON-SIBILITY FOR THIS FAILURE!

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, IT SEEMS THAT THERE WAS A TRAITOR IN NIUZHU.

YES. GENERAL ZHANG YING CANNOT BE ENTIRELY BLAMED FOR THIS LOSS.

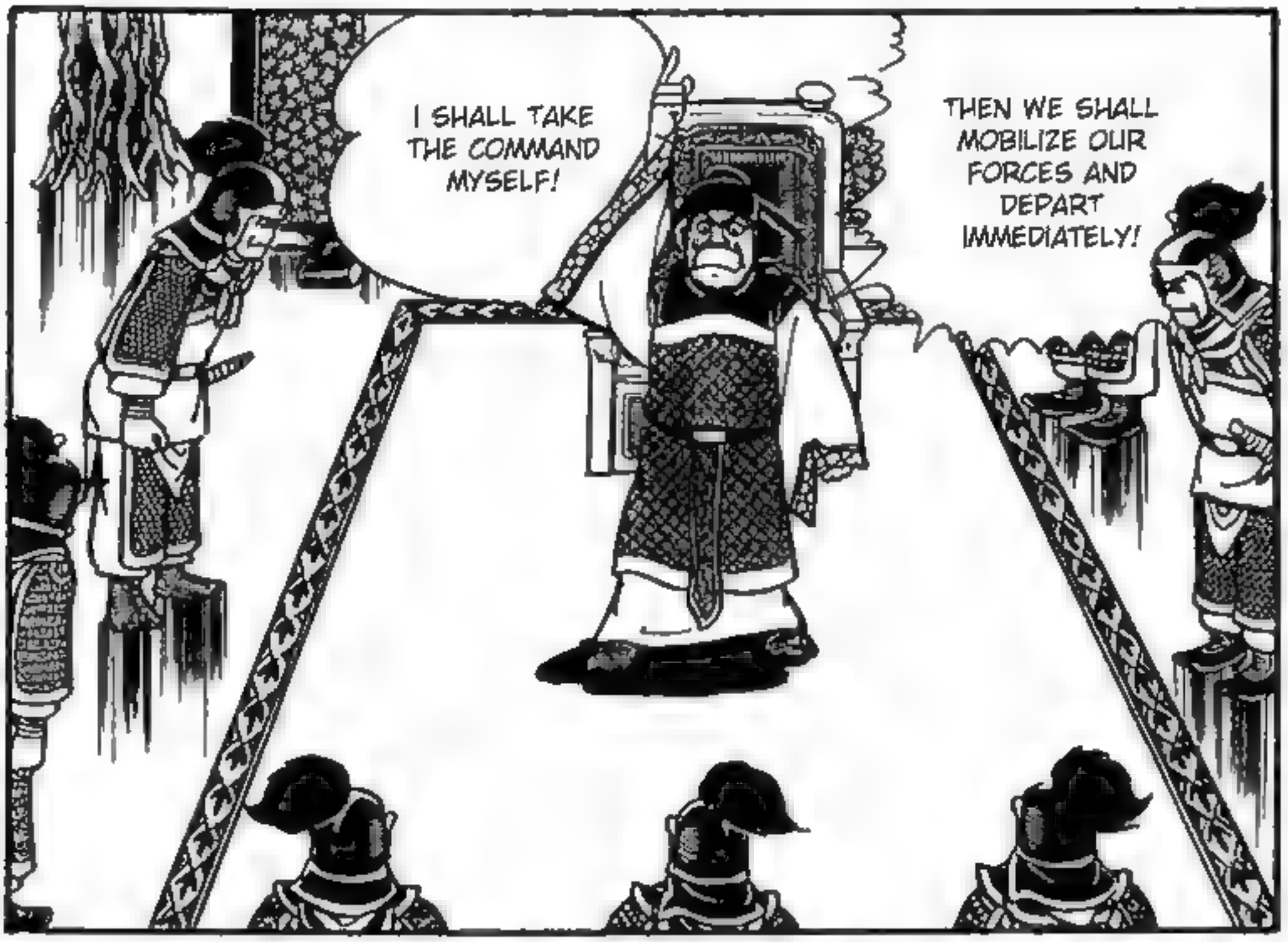
I BELIEVE SIR IS BEING TOO RASH!

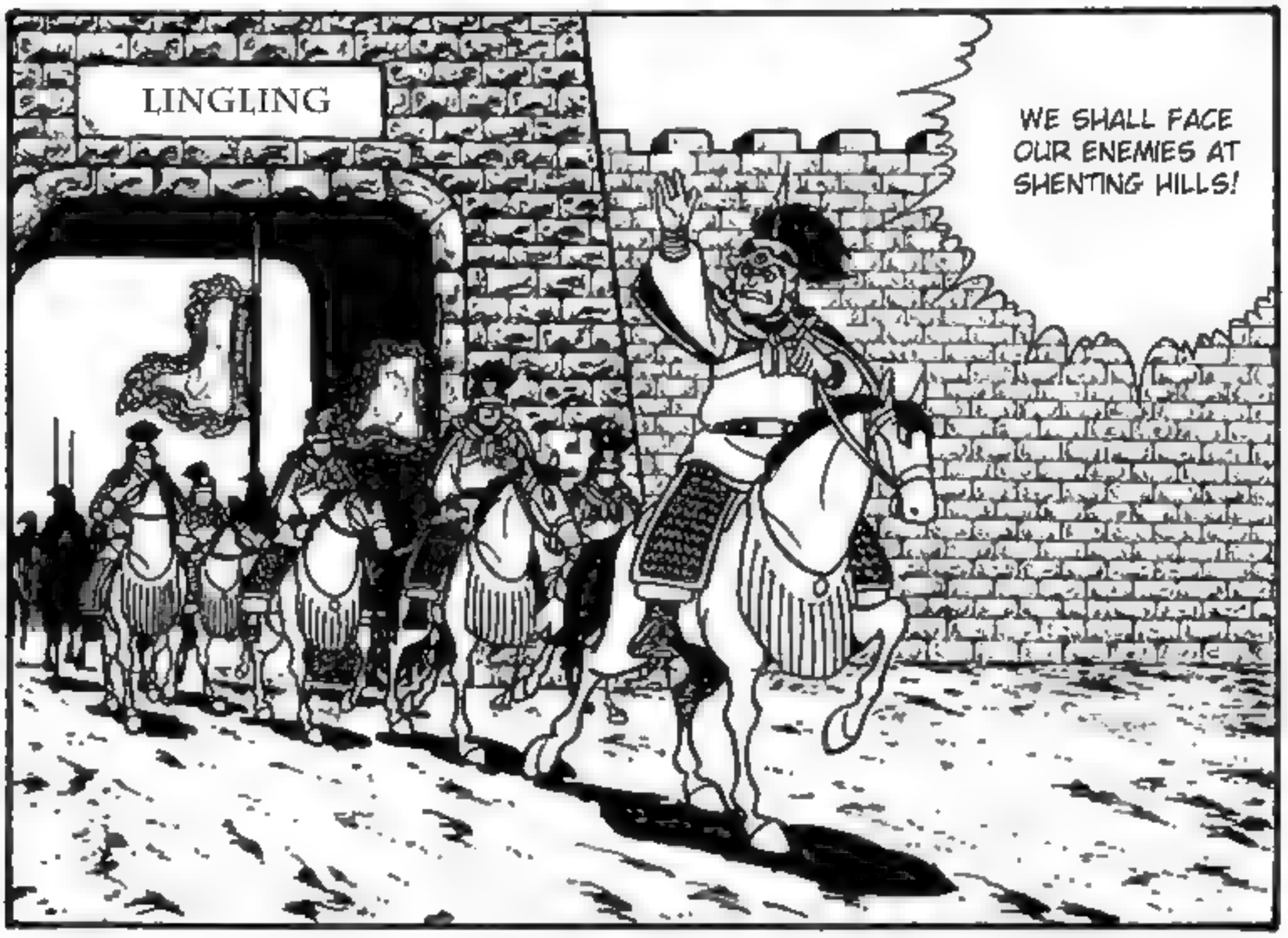
SIR, PLEASE CALM DOWN!

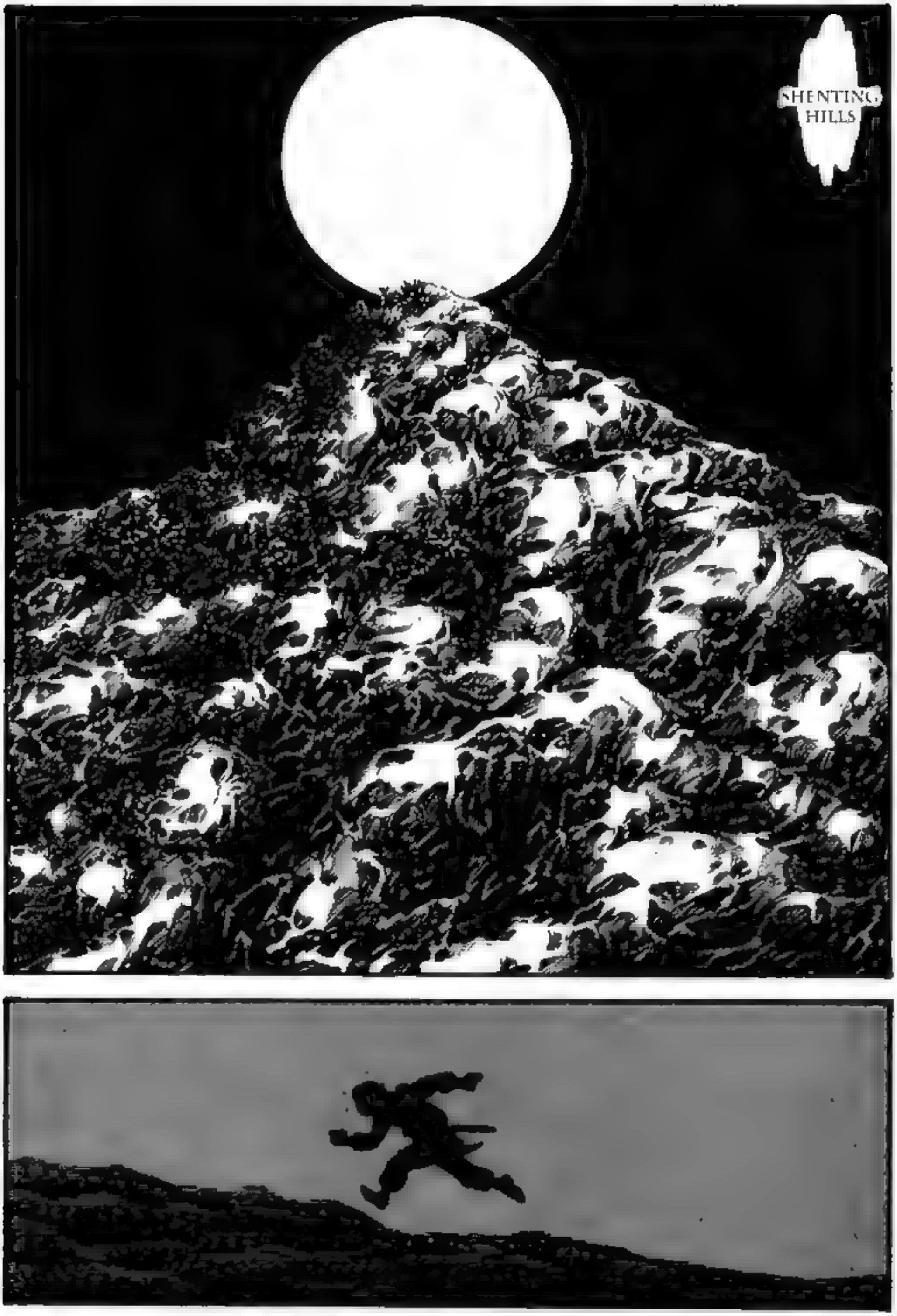
SUN CE IS STILL BUT A CHILD. THERE IS NOTHING TO PANIC ABOUT.

PLEASE HAVE A GLASS AND CALM YOURSELF DOWN, MY LORD.

FINE. IF YOU GENTLEMEN INSIST, I SHALL PARDON ZHANG YING FOR TODAY.


I SHALL TAKE THE COMMAND MYSELF!
THEN WE SHALL MOBILIZE OUR FORCES AND DEPART IMMEDIATELY!


LINGLING
WE SHALL FACE OUR ENEMIES AT SHENTING HILLS!


SHENTING
HILLS

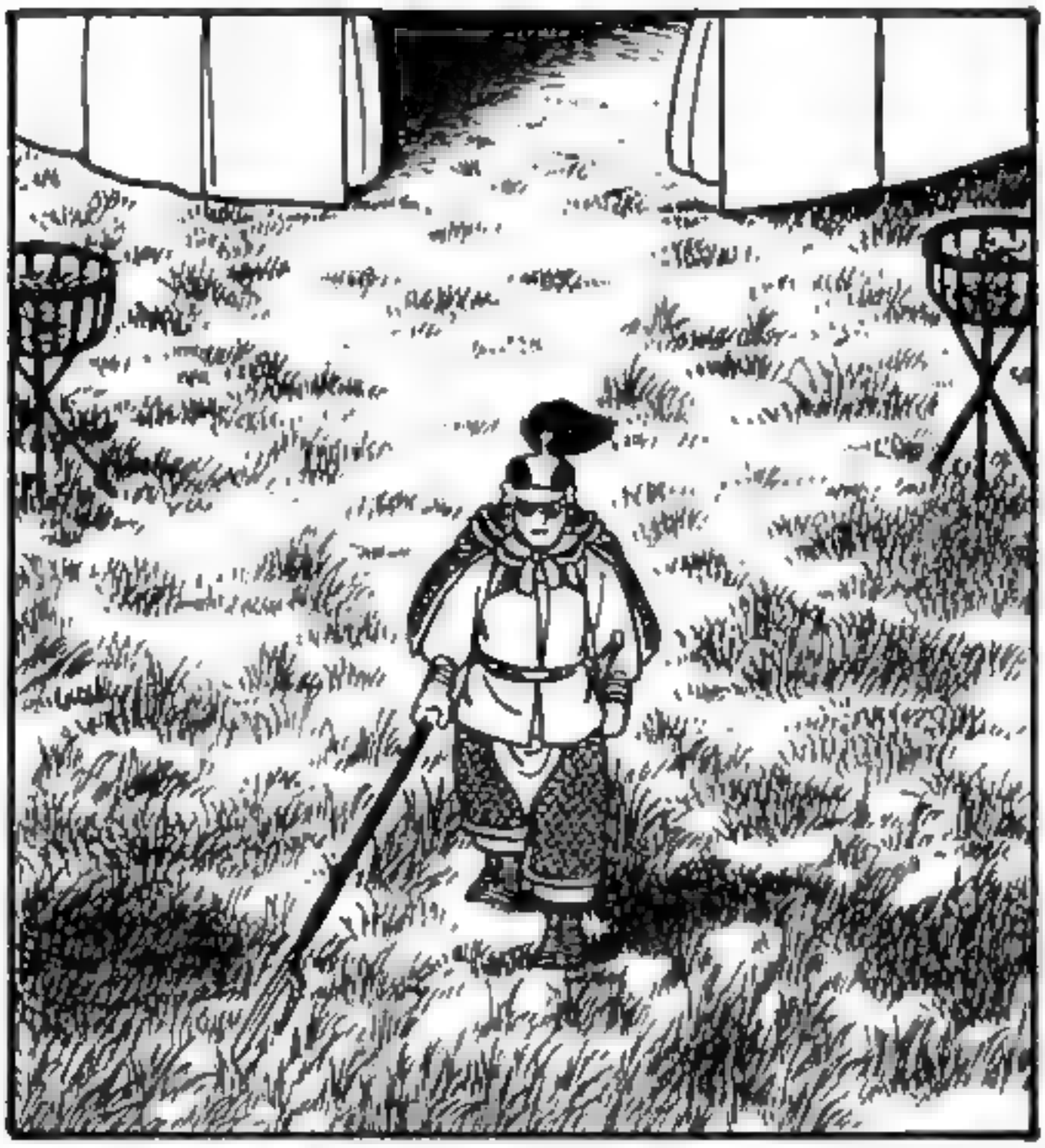
NO SIR. EVER SINCE LIU YAO'S FORCES HAVE MADE THEIR ENCAMPMENTS SOUTH OF SHENTING HILLS, THEY HAVE SHOWN NO NEW MOVEMENTS.

AH, GOOD. TELL ME, HAS LIU YAO'S FORCES SHOWN ANY NEW ACTIVITIES?

I HAVE COME BACK WITH A REPORT, COMMANDER.

SO THEY'RE WAITING FOR OUR SIDE TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE, ARE THEY...?

I SEE... GOOD WORK.



HMM?
ALRIGHT, I'M HEADING OUT. CARE TO JOIN ME?

TO THE TOP OF THE HILLS.
AND JUST WHERE IS OUR COM-MANDER HEADING OFF TO?

W-WHAT? THAT IS MUCH TOO DANGEROUS! PLEASE JUST LEAVE IT TO OUR SCOUTS, SIR.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE ENEMIES' FORMATIONS MYSELF.

THE TOP OF THE HILLS? AND WHY IS THAT, SIR?

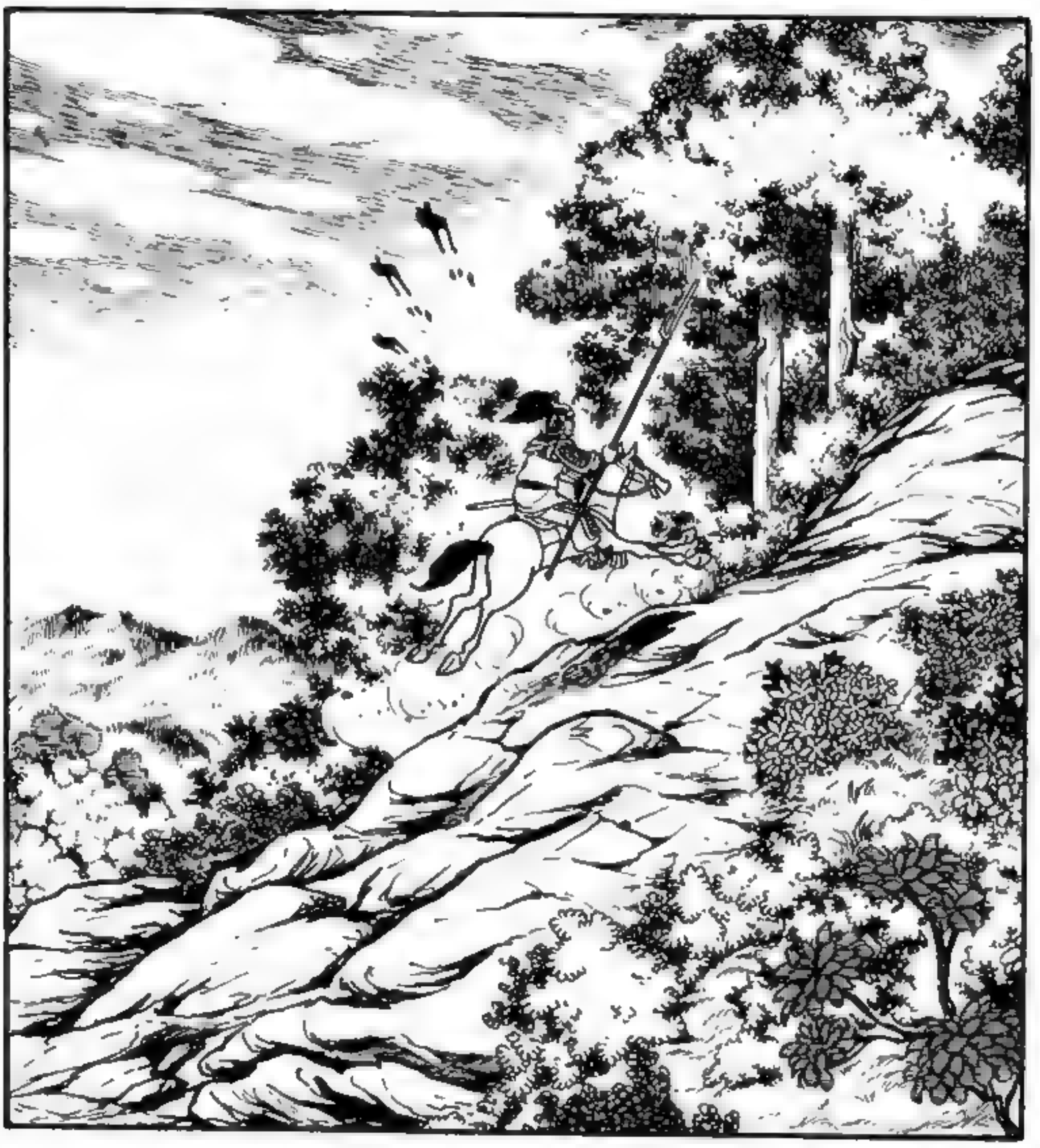
NOW COME ALONG.

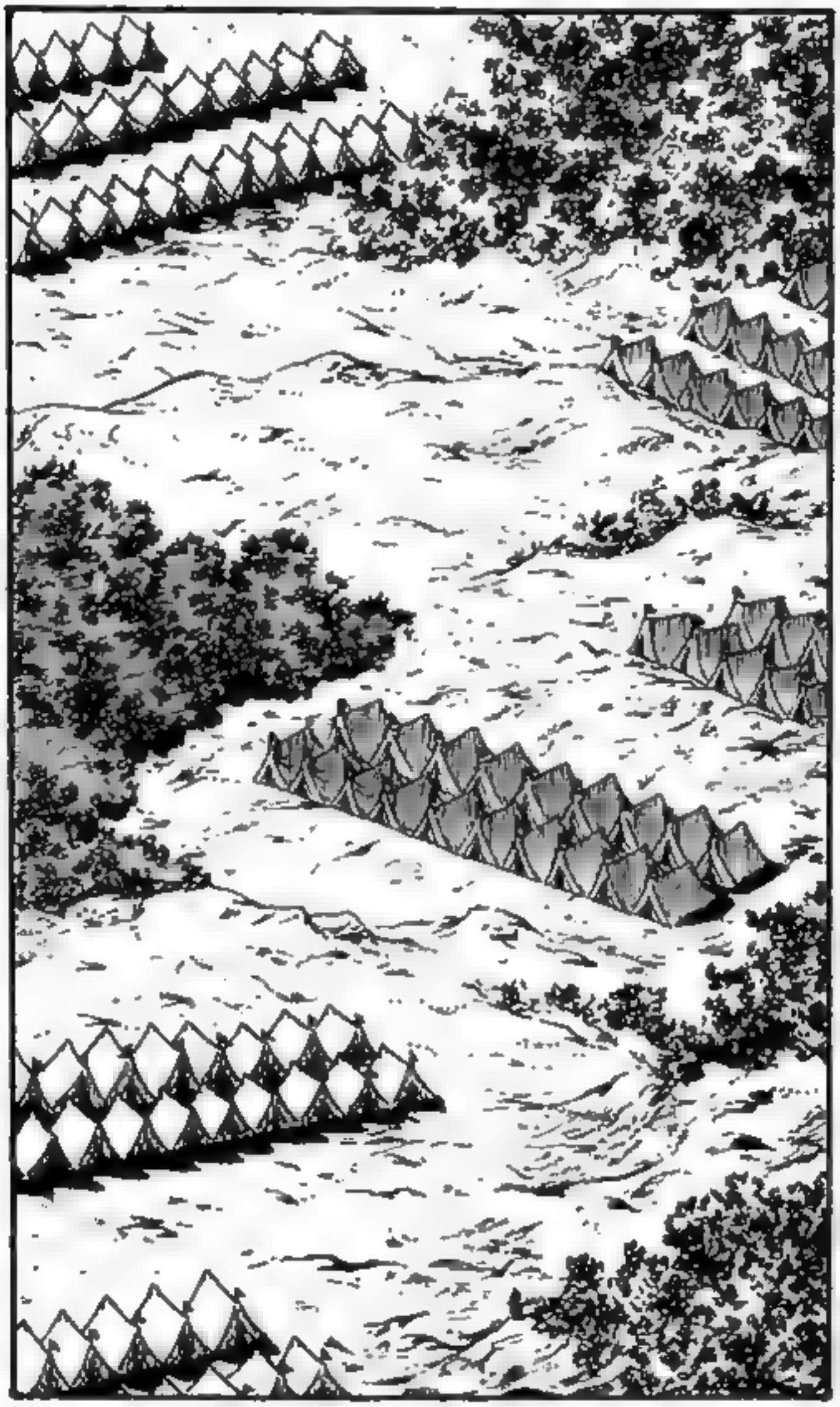
NO, I'D RATHER LIKE TO CONFIRM IT WITH MY OWN TWO EYES.

HE REALLY CAN BE QUITE RECKLESS...

P-PLEASE WAIT!

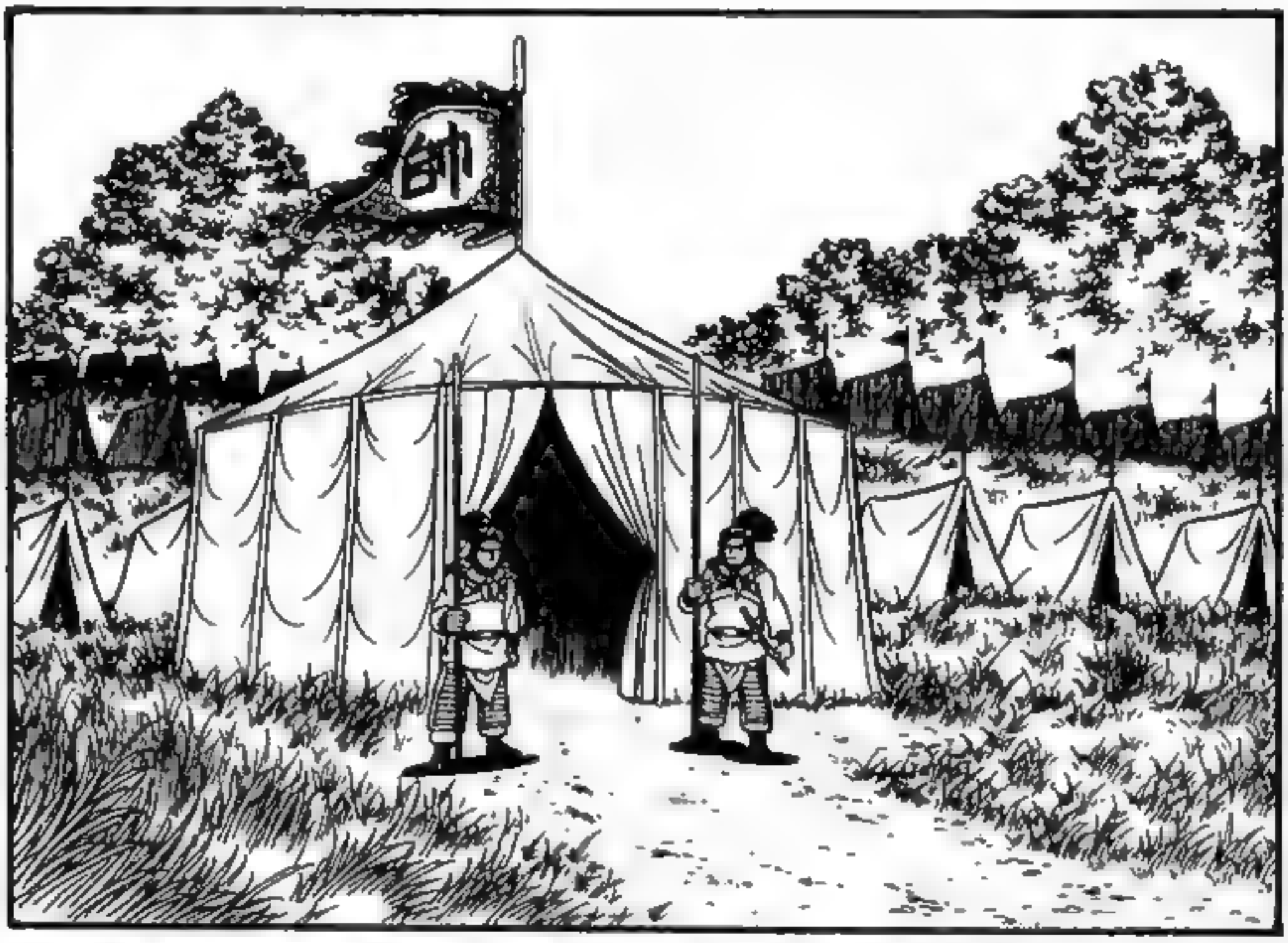
BUT SIR...!





IF HE'S BROUGHT THIS MANY SOLDIERS, THEN LINGLING CASTLE MUST BE NEARLY EMPTY!
HAHA... SO THOSE ARE LIU YAO'S TROOPS?

*COMMANDERS FLAG



YES, WITHOUT A DOUBT, COMMANDER.

SUN CE HIMSELF!? ARE YOU SURE?

WHAT!?

THIS MUST BE A TRAP.

HMM, THERE'S NO WAY HE WOULD SIMPLY COME ALL ALONE...

MY LORD, WE MUSTN'T LET THIS CHANCE ESCAPE. PLEASE GIVE ME THE ORDER TO GO AND CATCH HIM.

DON'T BE FOOLISH. THE ENEMY COMMANDER WOULDN'T CARELESSLY COME OUT ALL ALONE IF HE DIDN'T HAVE SOME SORT OF A PLAN. CAN'T YOU SEE THAT THIS IS SURELY A TRAP?

IF YOU WISH TO GO SO BADLY, THEN YOU MUST GO ALONE.

PLEASE GIVE ME THE ORDER, MY LORD!

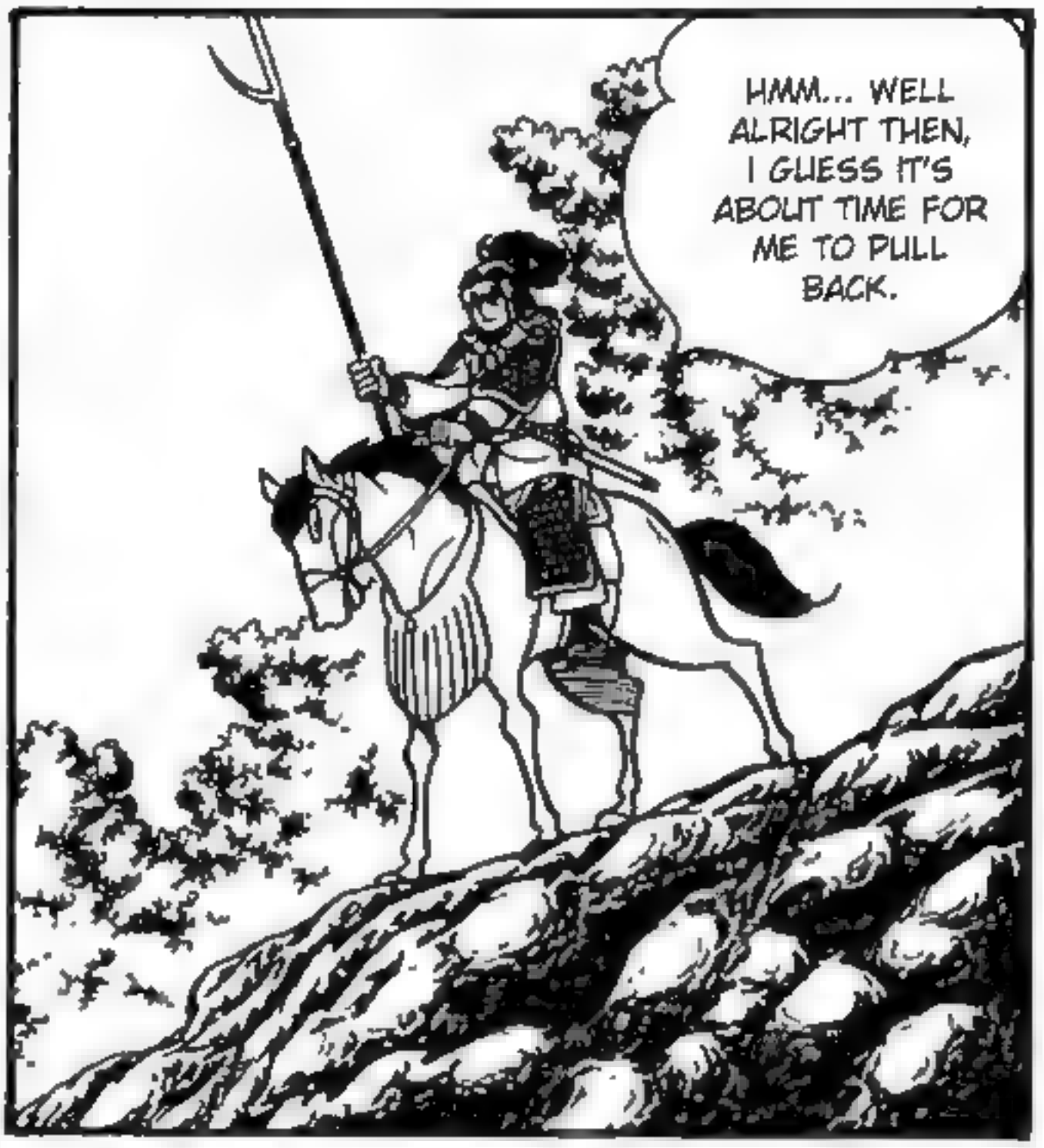
BUT EVEN SO, HOW COULD I JUST STAND HERE AND LET THIS RARE CHANCE SLIP THROUGH MY FINGERS?

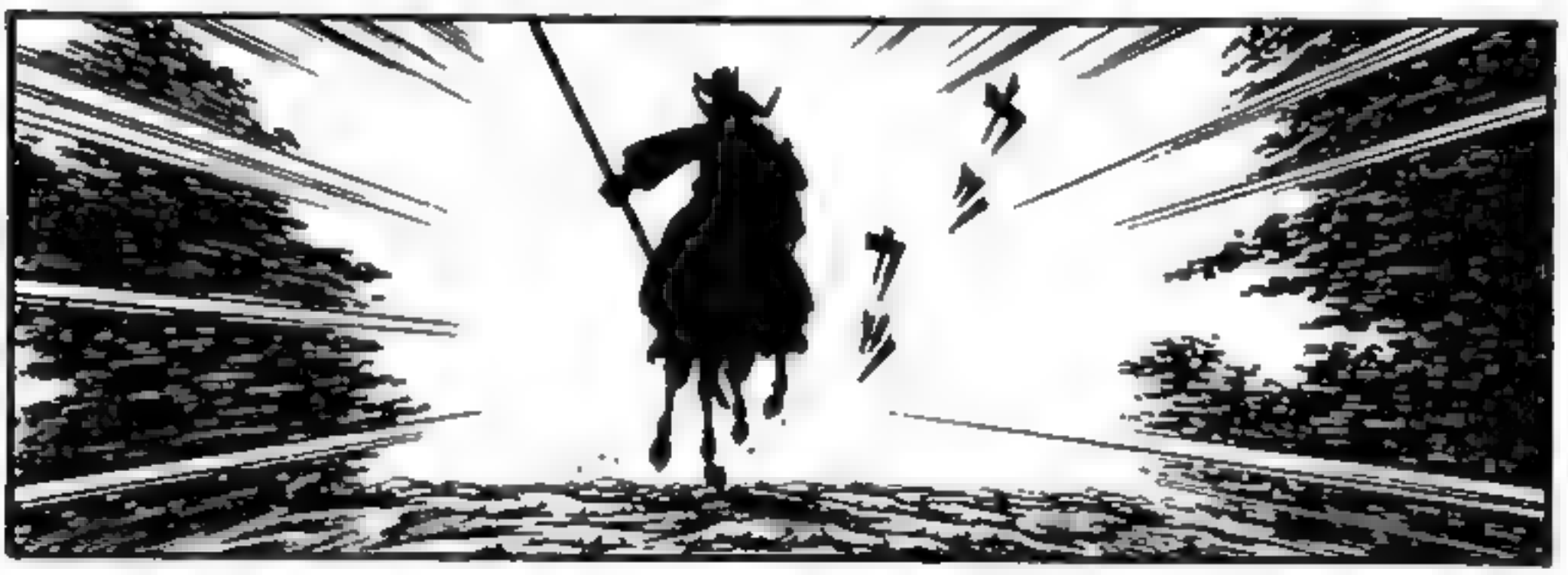
THANK YOU, MY LORD.

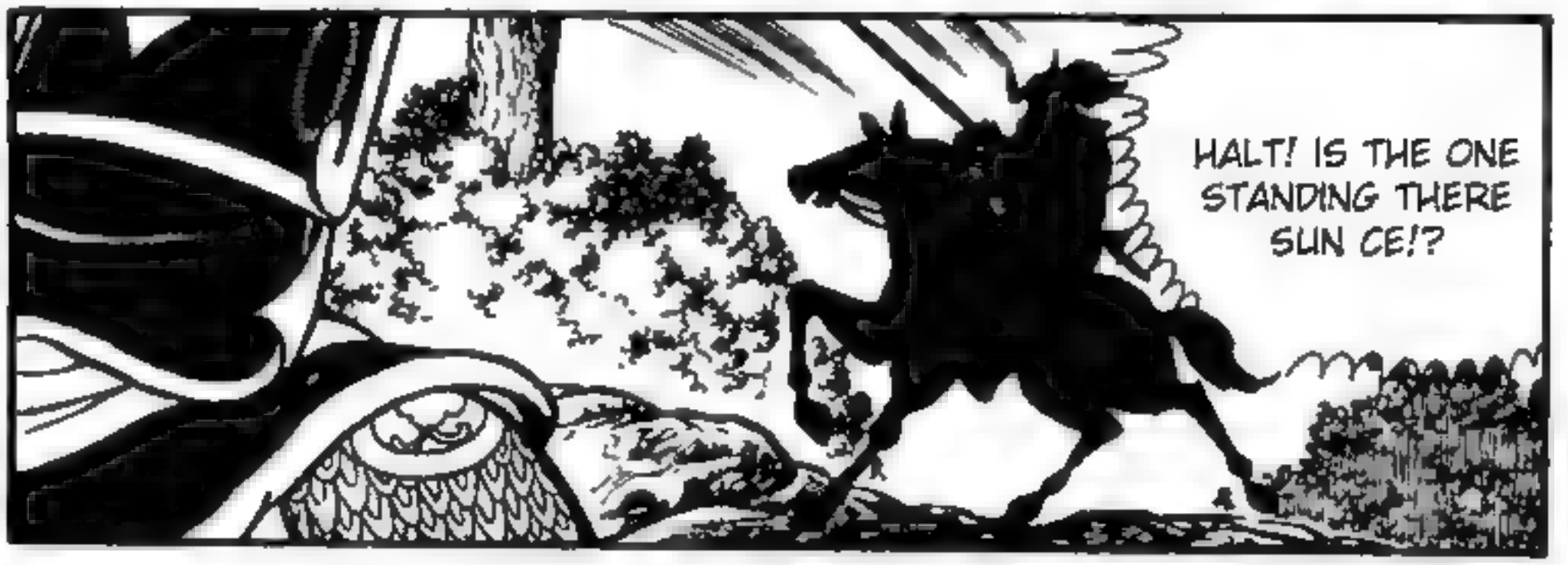
HAHAHA! SURELY THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE MEAN WHEN THEY REFER TO SOMEONE AS A "WILD BOAR"!

WHAT A FOOL! HE DARES TO CHARGE IN, KNOWING THAT IT'S A TRAP!?

HMM?


HMM... WELL ALRIGHT THEN, I GUESS IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR ME TO PULL BACK.



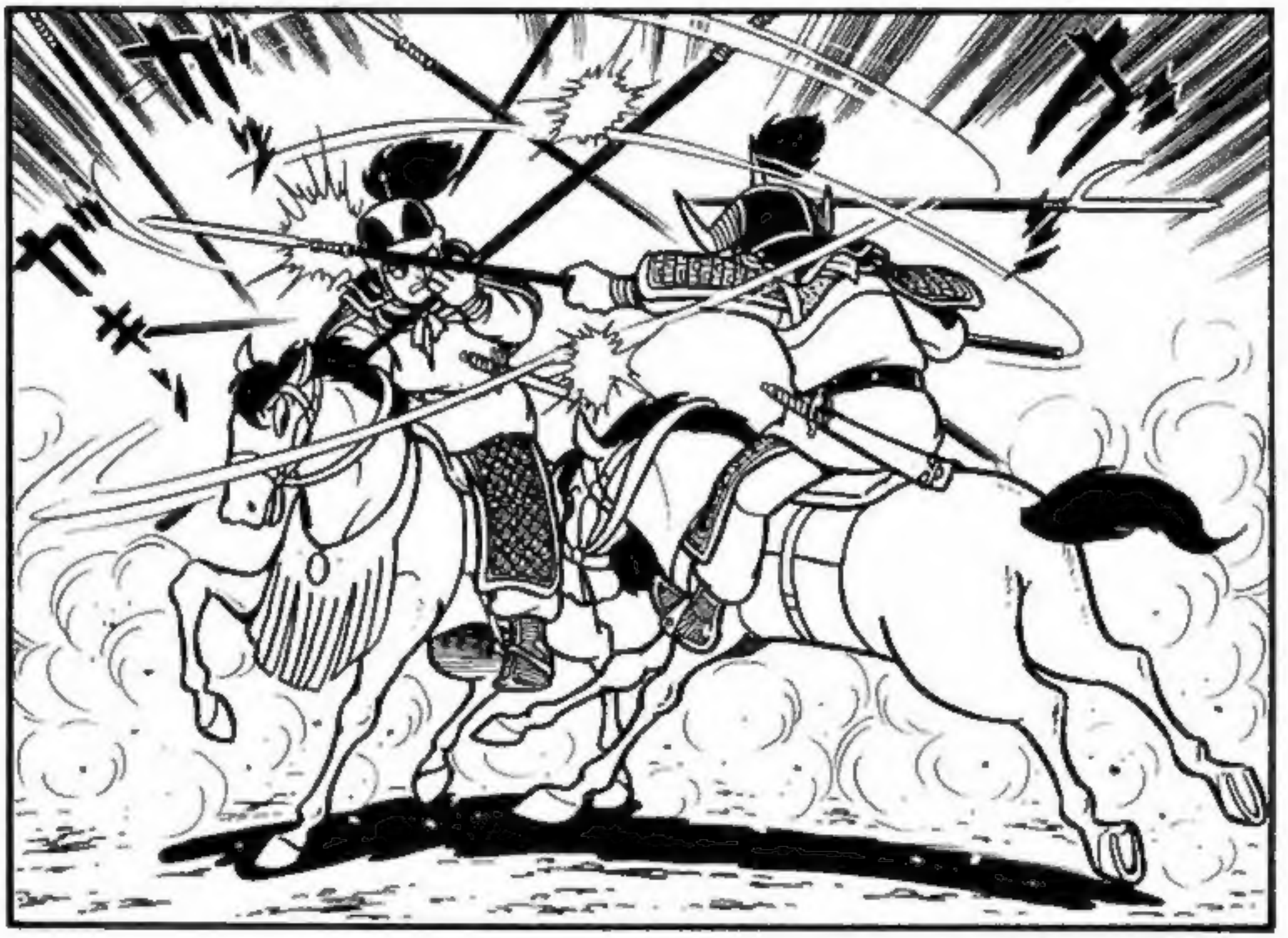

HALT! IS THE ONE STANDING THERE SUN CE!?

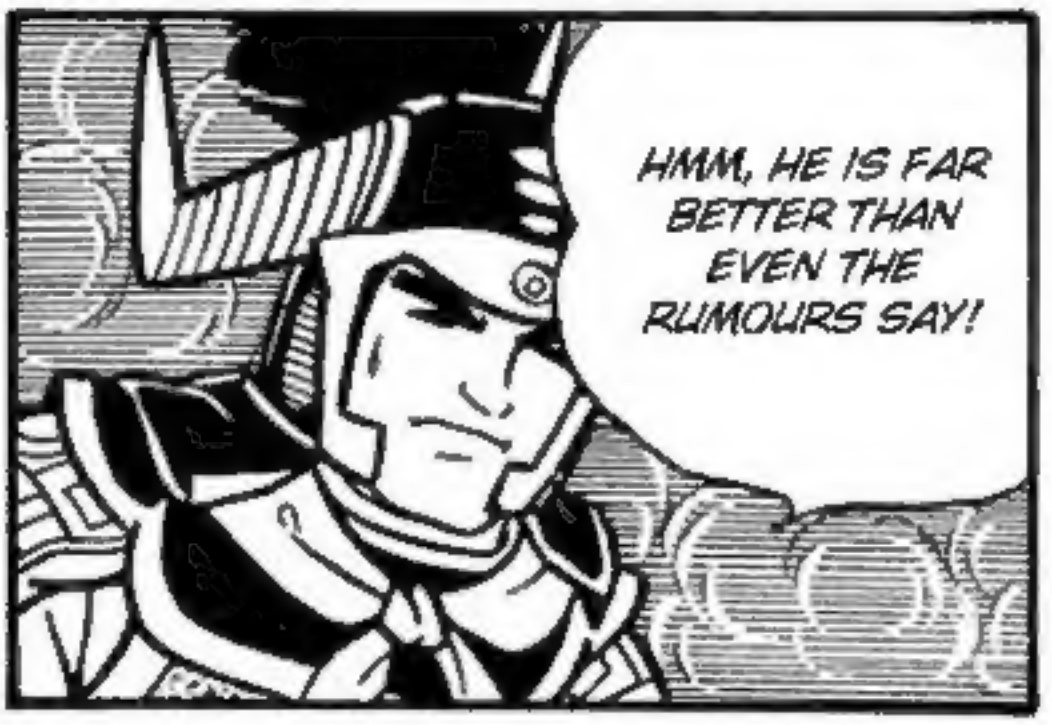
THEN I SHALL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR HEAD!

WHAT IF I AM?

HAHA. COME AT ME IF YOU DARE!

I AM TAISHI CI, ONE OF LIU YAO'S SUBORDI-NATES!




HMM, HE IS FAR BETTER THAN EVEN THE RUMOURS SAY!

HE'S BETTER THAN I THOUGHT... I CAN'T LET MY GUARD DOWN EVEN FOR A SECOND...!

IF I DON'T TAKE HIM DOWN HERE, HE'LL BE A GREAT THREAT IN THE FUTURE...!
AS GREAT OF A WARRIOR SUN CE WAS, TAISHI CI PROVED TO BE HIS EQUAL IN EVERY WAY.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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三国志

10

横山 光輝

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